JOY

JOHN GALSWORTHY

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
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JOY

A PLAY ON THE LETTER "I"
IN THREE ACTS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

VILLA RUBEIN : AND OTHER STORIES

THE ISLAND PHARISEES

THE MAN OF PROPERTY

THE COUNTRY HOUSE

FRATERNITY

THE PATRICIAN

THE INN OF TRANQUILLITY

A COMMENTARY

A MOTLEY

PLAYS

VOL. I { THE SILVER BOX, JOY, STRIFE

VOL. II { JUSTICE, LITTLE DREAM, ELDEST SON

AND SEPARATELY

THE PIGEON

JOY

A PLAY ON THE LETTER "I" IN THREE ACTS

BY

JOHN GALSWORTHY

LONDON
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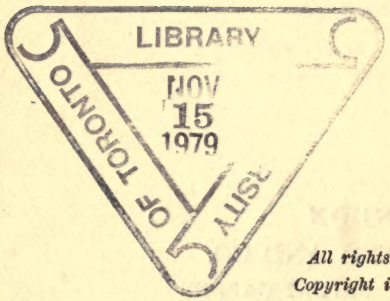

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PERSONS OF THE PLAY

COLONEL HOPE, R.A., *retired*
MRS. HOPE, *his wife*
MISS BEECH, *their old governess*
LETTY, *their daughter*
ERNEST BLUNT, *her husband*
MRS. GWYN, *their niece*
JOY, *her daughter*
DICK MERTON, *their young friend*
HON. MAURICE LEVER. *their guest*
ROSE, *their varlourmaid*

TIME: The present. The action passes throughout mid-summer day on the lawn of Colonel Hope's house, near the Thames above Oxford.

CAST OF THE ORIGINAL PRODUCTION AT THE SAVOY THEATRE, LONDON, ON SEPTEMBER 24, 1907

COLONEL HOPE	*Mr. A. E. George*
MRS. HOPE	*Miss Henrietta Watson*
MISS BEECH	*Miss Florence Haydon*
LETTY	*Miss Mary Barton*
ERNEST BLUNT	*Mr. Frederick Lloyd*
MRS. GWYN	*Miss Wynne Matthison*
JOY	*Miss Dorothy Minto*
DICK MERTON	*Mr. Alan Wade*
HON. MAURICE LEVER	*Mr. Thalberg Corbet*
ROSE	*Miss Amy Lamborn*

ACT I

[*The time is morning, and the scene a level lawn, beyond which the river is running amongst fields. A huge old beech tree overshadows everything, in the darkness of whose hollow many things are hidden. A rustic seat encircles it. A low wall clothed in creepers, with two openings, divides this lawn from the flowery approaches to the house. Close to the wall there is a swing. The sky is clear and sunny.* COLONEL HOPE *is seated in a garden-chair, reading a newspaper through pince-nez. He is fifty-five, and bald, with drooping grey moustaches and a weather-darkened face. He wears a flannel suit, and a hat from Panama; a tennis racquet leans against his chair.* MRS. HOPE *comes quickly through the opening of the wall, with roses in her hands. She is going grey; she wears tan gauntlets, and no hat. Her manner is decided, her voice emphatic, as though aware that there is no nonsense in its owner's composition. Screened by the hollow tree,* MISS BEECH *is seated; and* JOY *is perched on a lower branch, concealed by foliage.*

MRS. HOPE. I told Molly in my letter that she'd have to walk up, Tom.

COLONEL. Walk up in this heat? My dear, why didn't you order Benson's fly?

MRS. HOPE. Expense for nothing! Bob can bring up her things in the barrow. I've told Joy I won't have her going down to meet the train. She's so excited about her mother's coming there's no doing anything with her.

COLONEL. No wonder, after two months.

MRS. HOPE. Well, she's going home to-morrow she must just keep herself fresh for the dancing to night. I'm not going to get people in to dance, and have Joy worn out before they begin.

COLONEL. [*Dropping his paper.*] I don't like Molly's walking up.

MRS. HOPE. A great strong woman like Molly Gwyn! It isn't half a mile.

COLONEL. I don't like it, Nell; it's not hospitable.

MRS. HOPE. Rubbish! If you want to throw away money, you must just find some better investment than those wretched three per cents of yours. The green-fly are in my roses already! Did you ever see anything so *disgusting*? [*They bend over the roses they have grown, and lose all sense of everything.*] Where's the syringe? I saw you mooning about with it last night, Tom.

COLONEL. [*Uneasily.*] Mooning! [*He retires behind his paper.* MRS. HOPE *enters the hollow of the tree.*] There's an account of that West Australian swindle. Set of ruffians! Listen to this, Nell! "It is under-

stood that amongst the shareholders are large numbers of women, clergymen, and Army officers." How people can be such fools!

[*Becoming aware that his absorption is unobserved, he drops his glasses, and reverses his chair towards the tree.*

MRS. HOPE. [*Reappearing with a garden syringe.*] I simply won't have Dick keep his fishing things in the tree; there's a whole potful of disgusting worms. *I* can't touch them. *You* must go and take 'em out, Tom. [*In his turn the* COLONEL *enters the hollow of the tree.*

MRS. HOPE. [*Personally.*] What on earth's the pleasure of it? I can't see! He never catches anything worth eating.

[*The* COLONEL *reappears with a paint pot full of worms; he holds them out abstractedly.*

MRS. HOPE. [*Jumping.*] Don't put them near me!

MISS BEECH. [*From behind the tree.*] Don't hurt the poor creatures.

COLONEL. [*Turning.*] Hallo, Peachey? What are *you* doing round there?

[*He puts the worms down on the seat.*

MRS. HOPE. Tom, take the worms off that seat at once!

COLONEL. [*Somewhat flurried.*] Good gad! *I* don't know what to do with the beastly worms!

MRS. HOPE. It's not *my* business to look after Dick's worms. Don't put them on the ground. I won't have them anywhere where they can crawl about. [*She flicks some green fly off her roses.*

COLONEL. [*Looking into the pot as though the worms could tell him where to put them.*] Dash!

MISS BEECH. Give them to me.

MRS. HOPE. [*Relieved.*] Yes, give them to Peachey.

[*There comes from round the tree* MISS BEECH, *old-fashioned, barrel-shaped, balloony in the skirts. She takes the paint pot, and sits beside it on the rustic seat.*

MISS BEECH. Poor creatures!

MRS. HOPE. Well, it's beyond *me* how you can make pets of worms—wriggling, crawling, horrible things!

[ROSE, *who is young and comely, in a pale print frock, comes from the house and places letters before her on a silver salver.*

[*Taking the letters.*] What about Miss Joy's frock, Rose?

ROSE. Please, 'm, I can't get on with the back without Miss Joy.

MRS. HOPE. Well, then you must just find her. *I* don't know where she is.

ROSE. [*In a slow, sidelong manner.*] If you please, Mum, I think Miss Joy's up in the——

[*She stops, seeing* MISS BEACH *signing to her with both hands.*

MRS. HOPE. [*Sharply.*] What is it, Peachy?

MISS BEECH. [*Selecting a finger.*] Pricked meself!

MRS. HOPE. Let's look!

[*She bends to look, but* MISS BEECH *places the finger in her mouth.*

ROSE. [*Glancing askance at the* COLONEL.] If you please, Mum, it's—below the waist, I think I can manage with the dummy.

MRS. HOPE. Well, you can try. [*Opening her letter as* ROSE *retires.*] Here's Molly about her train.

MISS BEACH. Is there a letter for me?

MRS. HOPE. No, Peachey.

MISS BEECH. There never is.

COLONEL. What's that? You got four by the first post.

MISS BEECH. Exceptions!

COLONEL. [*Looking over his glasses.*] Why! You know, you get 'em every day!

MRS. HOPE. Molly says she'll be down by the eleven thirty. [*In an injured voice.*] She'll be here in half an hour! [*Reading with disapproval from the letter.*] "MAURICE LEVER is coming down by the same train to see Mr. Henty about the Tocopala Gold Mine. Could you give him a bed for the night?"

[*Silence, slight but ominous.*

COLONEL. [*Calling in to his aid his sacred hospitality.*] Of course we must give him a bed!

MRS. HOPE. Just like a man! What room I should like to know!

COLONEL. Pink.

MRS. HOPE. As if *Molly* wouldn't have the Pink!

COLONEL. [*Ruefully.*] I thought she'd have the blue!

MRS. HOPE. You know perfectly well it's full of earwigs, Tom. I killed ten there yesterday morning.

MISS BEECH. Poor creatures!

MRS. HOPE. I don't know that I approve of this Mr. Lever's dancing attendance. Molly's only thirty-six.

COLONEL. [*In a high voice.*] You can't refuse him a bed; I never heard of such a thing.

MRS. HOPE. [*Reading from the letter.*] "This gold mine seems to be a splendid chance. [*She glances at the* COLONEL.] I've put all *my* spare cash into it. They're issuing some Preference shares now; if Uncle Tom wants an investment." [*She pauses, then in a changed, decided voice.*] Well, I suppose I shall have to screw him in somehow.

COLONEL. What's that about gold mines? Gambling nonsense! Molly ought to know my views.

MRS. HOPE. [*Folding the letter away out of her consciousness.*] Oh! your views! This may be a specially good chance.

MISS BEECH. Ahem! Special case!

MRS. HOPE. [*Paying no attention.*] I'm sick of these 8 per cent dividends. When you've only got so little money, to put it all into that India Stock, when it might be earning 6 per cent. at least, quite safely! There are ever so many things I want.

COLONEL. There you go!

MRS. HOPE. As to Molly, *I* think it's high time her husband came home to look after her, instead of sticking out there in that hot place. In fact

[MISS BEECH *looks up at the tree and exhibits cerebral excitement*]

I don't know what Geoff's about; why doesn't he

find something in England, where they could live together.

COLONEL. Don't say anything against Molly, Nell!

MRS. HOPE. Well, I don't believe in husband and wife being separated. That's not my idea of married life.

[*The* COLONEL *whistles quizzically.*]

Ah, yes, she's *your* niece, not *mine!* Molly's very—

MISS BEECH. Ouch! [*She sucks her finger.*]

MRS. HOPE. Well, if I couldn't sew at your age, Peachey, without pricking my fingers! Tom, if I have Mr. Lever here, you'll just attend to what I say and look into that mine!

COLONEL. Look into your grandmother! I haven't made a study of geology for nothing. For every ounce you take out of a gold mine, you put an ounce and a half in. Any fool knows that, eh, Peachey?

MISS BEECH. I hate your horrid mines, with all the poor creatures underground.

MRS. HOPE. Nonsense, Peachey! As if they'd go there if they didn't want to!

COLONEL. Why don't you read your paper, then you'd see what a lot of wild-cat things there are about.

MRS. HOPE. [*Abstractedly.*] I can't put Ernest and Letty in the blue-room, there's only the single bed. Suppose I put Mr. Lever there, and say nothing about the earwigs. I daresay he'll never notice.

COLONEL. Treat a guest like that!

MRS. HOPE. Then where am I to put him for goodness sake?

COLONEL. Put him in my dressing-room, I'll turn out.

MRS. HOPE. Rubbish, Tom, I won't have you turned out, that's flat. He can have Joy's room, and she can sleep with the earwigs.

JOY. [*From her hiding-place upon a lower branch of the hollow tree.*] I won't.

[MRS. HOPE *and the* COLONEL *jump.*

COLONEL. God bless my soul!

MRS. HOPE. You wretched girl? I told you never to climb that tree again. Did *you* know, Peachey?

[MISS BEECH, *smiles.*

She's always up there, spoiling all her frocks. Come down now, Joy; there's a good child!

JOY. I don't want to sleep with earwigs, Aunt Nell.

MISS BEECH. *I'll* sleep with the poor creatures.

MRS. HOPE. [*After a pause.*] Well, it would be a mercy if you would for once, Peachey.

COLONEL. Nonsense, I won't have Peachey——

MRS. HOPE. Well, who is to sleep there then?

JOY. [*Coaxingly.*] Let me sleep with *Mother*, Aunt Nell, do!

MRS. HOPE. Litter her up with a great girl like you, as if we'd only one spare room! Tom, see that she comes down—I can't stay here, I must manage something. [*She goes away towards the house.*

COLONEL. [*Moving to the tree, and looking up.*] You heard what your Aunt said?

JOY. [*Softly.*] Oh, Uncle Tom!

COLONEL. I shall have to come up after you.

JOY. Oh, *do*, and Peachey too!

COLONEL. [*Trying to restrain a smile.*] Peachey, you talk to her. [*Without waiting for* MISS BEECH *however, he proceeds.*] What'll your Aunt say to me if I don't get you down?

MISS BEECH. Poor creature!

JOY. I don't want to be worried about my frock.

COLONEL. [*Scratching his bald head.*] Well, *I* shall catch it.

JOY. Oh, Uncle Tom, your head is so beautiful from here! [*Leaning over, she fans it with a leafy twig.*

MISS BEECH. Disrespectful little toad.

COLONEL. [*Quickly putting on his hat.*] You'll fall out, and a pretty mess that'll make on—[*he looks uneasily at the ground*]—*my* lawn!

[*A voice is heard calling "Colonel! Colonel!"*

JOY. There's Dick calling you, Uncle Tom.

[*She disappears.*

DICK. [*Appearing in the opening of the wall.*] Ernie's waiting to play you that single, Colonel!

[*He disappears.*

JOY. Quick, Uncle Tom! Oh! *do* go, before he finds I am up here.

MISS BEECH. Secret little creature!

[*The* COLONEL *picks up his racquet, shakes his fist, and goes away.*

JOY. [*Calmly.*] I'm coming down now, Peachey

[*Climbing down.*] Look out! I'm dropping on your head.

MISS. BEECH. [*Unmoved.*] Don't hurt yourself!

[JOY *drops on the rustic seat and rubs her shin.*] Told you so! [*She hunts in a little bag for plaster.*] Let's see!

JOY. [*Seeing the worms.*] Ugh!

MISS BEECH. What's the matter with the poor creatures?

JOY. They're so wriggly!

[*She backs away and sits down in the swing. She is just seventeen, light and slim, brown-haired, fresh-coloured, and gray-eyed; her white frock reaches to her ankles, she wears a sun-bonnet.*]

Peachey, how long were you Mother's governess?

MISS BEECH. Five years.

JOY. Was she as bad to teach as me?

MISS BEECH. Worse! [JOY *claps her hands.*] She was the worst girl I ever taught.

JOY. Then you weren't fond of her?

MISS BEECH. Oh! yes, I was.

JOY. Fonder than of me?

MISS BEECH. Don't you ask such a lot of questions!

JOY. Peachey, duckie, what was Mother's *worst* fault?

MISS BEECH. Doing what she knew she oughtn't.

JOY. Was she ever sorry?

MISS BEECH. Yes, but she always went on doin' it.

JOY. *I* think being sorry's stupid!

MISS BEECH. Oh, do you?

JOY. It isn't any good. Was Mother revengeful, like me?

MISS BEECH. Ah! Wasn't she?

JOY. And jealous?

MISS BEECH. The most jealous girl I ever saw.

JOY. [*Nodding.*] I *like* to be like her.

MISS BEECH. [*Regarding her intently.*] Yes! you've got all your troubles before *you.*

JOY. Mother was married at eighteen, wasn't she, Peachey? Was she—was she much in love with Father then?

MISS BEECH. [*With a sniff.*] About as much as usual. [*She takes the paint pot, and walking round begins to release the worms.*

JOY. [*Indifferently.*] They don't get on now, you know.

MISS BEECH. What d'you mean by that, disrespectful little creature?

JOY. [*In a hard voice.*] They haven't ever since *I've* known them.

MISS BEECH. [*Looks at her, and turns away again.*] Don't talk about such things.

JOY. I suppose you don't know Mr. Lever? [*Bitterly.*] He's such a cool beast. He never loses his temper.

MISS BEECH. Is that why you don't like him?

JOY. [*Frowning.*] No—yes—I don't know.

MISS BEECH. Oh! perhaps you *do* like him?

JOY. I don't; I hate him.

MISS BEECH. [*Standing still.*] Fie! Naughty temper!

JOY. Well, so would you! He takes up all Mother's time.

MISS BEECH. [*In a peculiar voice.*] Oh! does he!

JOY. When he comes *I* might just as well go to bed. [*Passionately.*] And now he's chosen to-day to come down here, when I haven't seen her for two months! Why couldn't he come when Mother and I'd gone home. It's simply brutal!

MISS BEECH. But your mother likes him?

JOY. [*Sullenly.*] I don't *want* her to like him.

MISS BEECH. [*With a long look at* JOY.] I see!

JOY. What are you doing, Peachey?

MISS BEECH. [*Releasing a worm.*] Letting the poor creatures go.

JOY. If I tell Dick he'll never forgive you.

MISS BEECH. [*Sidling behind the swing and plucking off* JOY's *sunbonnet. With devilry.*] Ah-h-h! You've done your hair up; so that's why you wouldn't come down!

JOY. [*Springing up and pouting.*] I didn't want any one to see before Mother. You *are* a pig, Peachey!

MISS BEECH. I thought there was *something!*

JOY. [*Twisting round.*] How does it look?

MISS BEECH. I've seen better.

JOY. You tell any one before Mother comes, and see what I do!

MISS BEECH. Well, don't you tell about my worms, then!

JOY. Give me my hat! [*Backing hastily towards the tree, and putting her finger to her lips.*] Look out! Dick!

MISS BEECH. Oh! dear!

[*She sits down on the swing concealing the paint pot with her feet and skirts.*

JOY. [*On the rustic seat, and in a violent whisper.*] I hope the worms will crawl up your legs!

[DICK, *in flannels and a hard straw hat comes in. He is a quiet and cheerful boy of twenty. His eyes are always fixed on* JOY.

DICK. [*Grimacing.*] The Colonel's getting licked. Hallo! Peachey, in the swing?

JOY. [*Chuckling.*] Swing her, Dick!

MISS BEECH. [*Quivering with emotion.*] Little creature!

JOY. Swing her! [DICK *takes the ropes.*

MISS BEECH. [*Quietly.*] It makes me sick, young man.

DICK. [*Patting her gently on the back.*] All right, Peachey.

MISS BEECH. [*Maliciously.*] Could you get me my sewing from the seat? Just behind Joy.

JOY. [*Leaning her head against the tree.*] If you do, I won't dance with you to-night.

[DICK *stands paralysed.* MISS BEECH *gets off the swing, picks up the paint pot and stands concealing it behind her.*

JOY. Look what she's got behind *her,* sly old thing!

MISS BEECH. Oh! dear!

JOY. Dance with her, Dick!

MISS BEECH. If he dare!

JOY. Dance with her, or I won't dance with you to-night. [*She whistles a waltz.*

DICK. [*Desperately.*] Come on then, Peachey. We *must.*

JOY. Dance, dance!

[DICK *seizes* MISS BEECH *by the waist. She drops the paint pot. They revolve.*

[*Convulsed.*] Oh, Peachey, oh!

[MISS BEECH *is dropped upon the rustic seat.* DICK *seizes* JOY'S *hands and drags her up.*] No, no! I won't!

MISS BEECH. [*Panting.*] Dance, dance with the poor young man! [*She moves her hands.*] La la—la *la* la—la *la* la! [DICK *and* JOY *dance.*

DICK. By Jove, Joy! You've done your hair up. I say, how jolly! You *do* look——

JOY. [*Throwing her hands up to her hair.*] I didn't mean *you* to see!

DICK. [*In a hurt voice.*] Oh! didn't you? I'm awfully sorry!

JOY. [*Flashing round.*] Oh, you old Peachey! [*She looks at the ground, and then again at* DICK.

MISS BEECH. [*Sidling round the tree.*] Oh! dear!

JOY. [*Whispering.*] She's been letting out your worms. [MISS BEECH *disappears from view.*] Look!

DICK. [*Quickly.*] Hang the worms! Joy, promise *me* the second and fourth and sixth and eighth and tenth and supper, to-night. Promise! Do!

[JOY *shakes her head.*]

It's not much to ask.

JOY. I won't promise anything.

DICK. Why not?

JOY. Because Mother's coming. I won't make any arrangements.

DICK. [*Tragically.*] It's our last night.

JOY. [*Scornfully.*] You don't understand! [*Dancing and clasping her hands.*] Mother's coming, mother's coming!

DICK. [*Violently.*] I wish—— Promise, Joy!

JOY. [*Looking over her shoulder.*] Sly old thing! If you'll pay Peachey out, I'll promise you supper!

MISS BEECH. [*From behind the tree.*] I hear you.

JOY. [*Whispering.*] Pay her out, pay her out! She's let out all your worms!

DICK. [*Looking moodily at the paint pot.*] I say, is it true that Maurice Lever's coming with your mother? I've met him playing cricket, he's rather a good sort.

JOY. [*Flashing out.*] *I hate him.*

DICK. [*Troubled.*] Do you? Why? I thought—I didn't know—if I'd *known* of course, I'd have——

[*He is going to say "hated him too!" But the voices of* ERNEST BLUNT *and the* COLONEL *are heard approaching, in dispute.*

JOY. Oh! Dick, hide me, I don't want my hair seen till Mother comes.

[*She springs into the hollow tree. The* COLONEL *and* ERNEST *appear in the opening of the wall.*

ERNEST. The ball *was* out, Colonel.

COLONEL. Nothing of the sort.

ERNEST. A good foot out.

COLONEL. It was not, sir. I saw the chalk fly.

[ERNEST *is twenty-eight, with a little moustache, and the positive cool voice of a young man who knows that he knows everything. He is perfectly calm.*

ERNEST. I was nearer to it than you.

COLONEL. [*In a high, hot voice.*] I don't care where you were, I hate a fellow who can't keep cool.

MISS BEECH. [*From behind the hollow tree.*] Fie! Fie!

ERNEST. We're two to one, Letty says the ball was out.

COLONEL. Letty's *your wife*, she'd say anything.

ERNEST. Well, look here, Colonel, I'll show you the very place it pitched.

COLONEL. Gammon! You've lost your temper, you don't know what your talking about.

ERNEST. [*Coolly.*] I suppose you'll admit the rule that one umpires one's own court.

COLONEL. [*Hotly.*] Certainly not *in this case!*

MISS BEECH. [*From behind the hollow tree.*] Special case!

ERNEST. [*Moving chin in collar—very coolly.*] Well, of course if you won't play the game!

COLONEL. [*In a towering passion.*] If you lose your temper like this, I'll never play with you again.

[*To* LETTY *a pretty soul in a linen suit, approaching through the wall.*

Do you mean to say that ball was out, Letty?

LETTY. Of course it was, father.

COLONEL. You say that because he's *your husband.* [*He sits on the rustic seat.*] If your mother 'd been there she'd have backed *me* up!

LETTY. Mother wants Joy, Dick, about her frock.

DICK. I—I don't know where she is.

MISS BEECH. [*From behind the hollow tree.*] Ahem!

LETTY. What's the matter Peachey?

MISS BEECH. Swallowed a fly. Poor creature!

ERNEST. [*Returning to his point.*] Why I know the ball was out, Colonel, was because it pitched in a line with that arbutus tree——

COLONEL. [*Rising.*] Arbutus tree! [*To his daughter.*] Where's your mother?

LETTY. In the blue room, Father.

ERNEST. The ball was a good foot out; at the height it was coming when it passed me——

COLONEL. [*Staring at him.*] You're a—you're a—a theorist! From where you were you couldn't see the ball at all. [*To* LETTY.] Where's you mother?

LETTY. [*Emphatically.*] In the *blue* room, Father!

[*The* COLONEL *glares confusedly, and goes away towards the 'lue room.*

ERNEST. [*In the swing, and with a smile.*] Your old Dad'll never be a sportsman!

LETTY. [*Indignantly.*] I wish you wouldn't call Father old, Ernie! What time's Molly coming, Peachey?

[ROSE *has come from the house, and stands waiting for a chance to speak.*

ERNEST. [*Breaking in.*] Your old Dad's only got one fault; he can't take an *impersonal* view of things.

MISS BEECH. Can you find me any one who can?

ERNEST. [*With a smile.*] Well, Peachey!

MISS BEECH. [*Ironically.*] Oh! of course, there's you!

ERNEST. I don't know about that! But——

ROSE. [*To* LETTY.] Please, Miss, the Missis says will you and Mr. Ernest please to move your things into Miss Peachey's room.

ERNEST. [*Vexed.*] Deuce of a nuisance havin' to turn out for this fellow Lever. What did Molly want to bring him for?

MISS BEECH. Course you've no personal feeling in the matter!

ROSE. [*Speaking to* MISS BEECH.] The Missis says you're to please move your things into the blue room, please Miss.

LETTY. Aha, Peachey! That settles you! Come on, Ernie!

[*She goes towards the house.* ERNEST, *rising from the swing, turns to* MISS BEECH, *who follows.*

ERNEST. [*Smiling, faintly superior.*] Personal, not a bit! I only think while Molly's out at grass, she oughtn't to——

MISS BEECH. [*Sharply.*] Oh! *do* you?

[*She hustles* ERNEST *out through the wall, but his voice is heard faintly from the distance:* "I *think it's jolly thin.*"

ROSE. [*To* DICK.] The Missis says you're to take all your worms and things, Sir, and put them where they won't be seen.

DICK. [*Shortly.*] Haven't got any!

ROSE. The Missis says she'll be very angry if you don't put your worms away; and would you come and help kill earwigs in the blue ——?

DICK. Hang! [*He goes, and* ROSE *is left alone.*

ROSE. [*Looking straight before her.*] Please, Miss Joy, the Missis says will you go to her about your frock.

[*There is a little pause, then from the hollow tree* JOY'S *voice is heard.*

JOY. No—o!

ROSE. If you didn't come, I was to tell you she was going to put you in the blue ——

[JOY *looks out of the tree.*]

[*Immovable, but smiling.*] Oh, Miss Joy, you've done your hair up! [JOY *retires into the tree.*] Please, Miss, what shall I tell the Missis?

JOY. [JOY'S *voice is heard.*] Anything you like!

ROSE. [*Over her shoulder.*] I shall be drove to tell her a story, Miss.

JOY. All right! Tell it.

[ROSE *goes away, and* JOY *comes out. She sits on the rustic seat and waits.* DICK, *coming softly from the house, approaches her.*

DICK. [*Looking at her intently.*] Joy! I wanted to say something——

[JOY *does not look at him, but twists her fingers.*] I shan't see you again you know after to-morrow till I come up for the 'Varsity match.

JOY. [*Smiling.*] But that's next week.

DICK. *Must* you go home to-morrow?

[JOY *nods three times.*

[*Coming closer.*] I shall miss you so awfully. You don't know how I—— [JOY *shakes her head.* Do look at me! [JOY *steals a look.*] Oh! Joy!

[*Again* JOY *shakes her head.*

JOY. [*Suddenly.*] Don't!

DICK. [*Seizing her hand.*] Oh, Joy! Can't you——

JOY. [*Drawing the hand away.*] Oh! don't.

DICK. [*Bending his head.*] It's—it's—so——

JOY. [*Quietly.*] Don't, Dick!

DICK. But I can't help it! It's too much for me, Joy, I must tell you——

[MRS GWYN *is seen approaching towards the house.*

JOY. [*Spinning round.*] It's Mother—oh, *Mother!*

[*She rushes at her.*

[MRS. GWYN *is a handsome creature of thirty-six, dressed in a muslin frock She twists her daughter round, and kisses her.*

MRS. GWYN. How sweet you look with your hair up, Joy! Who's this? [*Glancing with a smile at* DICK.

JOY. Dick Merton—in my letters you know.

[*She looks at* DICK *as though she wished him gone.*

MRS. GWYN. How do you do?

DICK. [*Shaking hands.*] How d'you do? I think if you'll excuse me—I'll go in.

[*He goes uncertainly.*

MRS. GWYN. What's the matter with him?

JOY. Oh, nothing! [*Hugging her.*] Mother! You *do* look such a duck. Why did you come by the towing-path, wasn't it *cooking?*

MRS. GWYN. [*Avoiding her eyes.*] Mr. Lever wanted to go into Mr. Henty's.

[*Her manner is rather artificially composed.*

JOY. [*Dully.*] Oh! Is he—is he really coming *here,* Mother?

MRS. GWYN. [*Whose voice has hardened just a little.*] If Aunt Nell's got a room for him—of course—why not?

JOY. [*Digging her chin into her mother's shoulder.*] Why couldn't he choose some day when we'd gone? I wanted you all to myself.

MRS. GWYN. You *are* a quaint child—when I was your age——

JOY. [*Suddenly looking up.*] Oh! Mother, you must have been a chook!

MRS. GWYN. Well, I was about twice as old as you, I know that.

JOY. Had you any—any other offers before you were married, Mother?

MRS. GWYN. [*Smilingly.*] Heaps!

JOY. [*Reflectively.*] Oh!

MRS. GWYN. Why? Have *you* been having any?

JOY. [*Glancing at* MRS. GWYN, *and then down.*] N—o, of course not!

MRS. GWYN. Where are they all? Where's Peachey?

JOY. Fussing about somewhere; don't let's hurry! Oh! you duckie—duckie! Aren't there any letters from Dad?

MRS. GWYN. [*In a harder voice.*] Yes, one or two.

JOY. [*Hesitating.*] Can't I see?

MRS. GWYN. I didn't bring them. [*Changing the subject obviously.*] Help me to tidy—I'm so hot I don't know what to do.

[*She takes out a powder-puff bag, with a tiny looking-glass.*

JOY. How lovely it'll be to-morrow—going home!

MRS. GWYN. [*With an uneasy look.*] London's dreadfully stuffy, Joy. You'll only get knocked up again.

JOY. [*With consternation.*] Oh! but Mother, I *must* come.

MRS. GWYN. [*Forcing a smile.*] Oh, well if you must, you must! [JOY *makes a dash at her.*] Don't rumple me again. Here's Uncle Tom.

JOY. [*Quickly.*] Mother, we're going to dance to-night, promise to dance with me. there are three

more girls than men, at least, and don't dance too much with—with—you know—because I'm—[*dropping her voice and very still*]—jealous.

MRS. GWYN. [*Forcing a laugh.*] You are funny!

JOY. [*Very quickly.*] *I* haven't made any engagements because of *you.*

[*The* COLONEL *approaches through the wall.*

MRS. GWYN. Well, Uncle Tom?

COLONEL. [*Genially.*] Why, Molly! [*He kisses her.*] What made you come by the towing-path?

JOY. Because it's so much cooler, of course.

COLONEL. Hallo! What's the matter with *you?* Phew! you've got your hair up! Go and tell your aunt your mother's on the lawn. Cut along!

[JOY *goes, blowing a kiss.*] Cracked about you, Molly! Simply cracked! We shall miss her when you take her off to-morrow. [*He places a chair for her.*] Sit down, sit down, you must be tired in this heat. I've sent Bob for your things with the wheelbarrow; what have you got—only a bag, I suppose?

MRS. GWYN. [*Sitting, with a smile.*] That's all, Uncle Tom, except—my trunk and hat-box.

COLONEL. Phew! And what's-his-name brought a bag, I suppose?

MRS. GWYN. They're all together. I hope it's not too much, Uncle Tom.

COLONEL. [*Dubiously*] Oh! Bob'll manage! I suppose you see a good deal of—of—Lever. That's his brother in the Guards, isn't it?

MRS GWYN. Yes.

COLONEL. Now what does this chap do.

MRS GWYN. What should he do, Uncle Tom? He's a Directer.

COLONEL. Guinea-pig! [*Dubiously.*] Your bringing him down was a good idea.

[MRS. GWYN, *looking at him sidelong, bites her lips.*]

I should like to have a look at him. But, I say, you know, Molly—mines, mines! There are a lot of these chaps about, whose business is to cook their own dinners. Your aunt thinks——

MRS. GWYN. Oh! Uncle Tom, don't tell me what Aunt Nell thinks!

COLONEL. Well—well! Look here, old girl! It's *my* experience never to—what I mean is—never to trust too much to a man who has to do with mining. *I've* always refused to have anything to do with mines. If your husband were in England, of course, I'd say nothing.

MRS. GWYN. [*Very still.*] We'd better keep *him* out of the question, hadn't we?

COLONEL. Of course, if you wish it, my dear.

MRS. GWYN. Unfortunately, I do.

COLONEL. [*Nervously.*] Ah! yes, I know; but look here, Molly, your aunt thinks you're in a very delicate position—in fact, she thinks you see too much of young Lever——

MRS. GWYN. [*Stretching herself like an angry cat.*] Does she? And what do *you* think?

COLONEL. I? I make a point of not thinking. I only know that here he is, and I don't want you to go burning your fingers, eh?

[MRS. GWYN *sits with a vindictive smile.*]

A gold mine's a *gold* mine. I don't mean he deliberately—but they take in women and parsons, and—and all sorts of fools. [*Looking down.*] And then, you know, I can't tell your feelings, my dear, and I don't want to; but a man about town'll compromise a woman as soon as he'll look at her, and [*softly shaking his head*] I don't like that, Molly! It's not the thing!

[MRS. GWYN *sits unmoved, smiling the same smile, and the* COLONEL *gives her a nervous look.*]

If—if—you were any other woman—*I* shouldn't care—and if—if you were a plain woman, damme, you might do what you liked! I know you and Geoff don't get on; but here's this child of yours, devoted to you, and—and don't you see, old girl? Eh?

MRS. GWYN. [*With a little hard laugh.*] Thanks! Perfectly! I suppose as you don't think, Uncle Tom, it never occurred to you that *I* have rather a lonely time of it.

COLONEL. [*With compunction.*] Oh! my dear, yes, of course I know it must be beastly.

MRS. GWYN. [*Stonily.*] It *is*.

COLONEL. Yes, yes! [*Speaking in a surprised voice.*] I don't know what I am talking like this for! It's your Aunt! She goes on at me till she gets on my

nerves. What d'you think she wants me to do now? Put money into this gold mine! Did you ever hear such folly?

MRS. GWYN. [*Breaking into laughter.*] Oh! Uncle Tom.

COLONEL. All very well for you to laugh, Molly!

MRS. GWYN. [*Calmly.*] And how much *are* you going to put in?

COLONEL. Not a farthing! Why, I've got nothing but my pension and three thousand India Stock!

MRS. GWYN. Only ninety pounds a year, besides your pension! D'you mean to say that's all you've got, Uncle Tom? I never knew that before. What a shame!

COLONEL. [*Feelingly.*] It *is*—a d--d shame! I don't suppose there's another case in the army of a man being treated as *I've* been.

MRS. GWYN. But how on earth do you manage here on so little?

COLONEL. [*Brooding.*] Your Aunt's very funny. She's a born manager. She'd manage the hind leg off a donkey; but if *I* want five shillings for a charity or what not, I have to whistle for it. And then all of a sudden, Molly, she'll take it into her head to spend goodness knows what on some trumpery or other, and come to me for the money. If I haven't got it to give her, out she flies about 3 per cent., and worries me to invest in some wild-cat or other, like your friend's thing, the Jaco—what is it? I don't pay the slightest attention to her.

MRS. HOPE. [*From the direction of the house.*] Tom!

COLONEL. [*Rising.*] Yes, dear! [*Then dropping his voice.*] I say, Molly, don't you mind what I said about young Lever. I don't wan't you to imagine that I think harm of people—you know I don't—but so many women come to grief, and—[*hotly*]—I can't stand men about town; not that he of course——

MRS. HOPE. [*Peremptorily.*] Tom!

COLONEL. [*In hasty confidence.*] I find it best to let your Aunt run on. If she says anything——

MRS. HOPE. To-om!

COLONEL. Yes, dear!

[*He goes hastily.* MRS. GWYN *sits drawing circles on the ground with her charming parasol. Suddenly she springs to her feet, and stands waiting like an animal at bay.* THE COLONEL *and* MRS. HOPE *approach her talking.*

MRS. HOPE. Well, how was *I* to know?

COLONEL. Didn't Joy come and tell you?

MRS. HOPE. I don't know what's the matter with that child? Well, Molly, so here you are. You're before your time—that train's always late.

MRS. GWYN. [*With faint irony.*] I'm sorry, Aunt Nell!

[THEY *bob, seem to take fright, and kiss each other gingerly.*

MRS. HOPE. What have you done with Mr. Lever? I shall have to put him in Peachey's room. Tom's got no champagne.

COLONEL. They've a very decent brand down at the George, Molly, I'll send Bob over——

MRS. HOPE. Rubbish, Tom! He'll just have to put up with what he can get!

MRS. GWYN. Of course! He's not a snob! For goodness sake, Aunt Nell, don't put yourself out! I'm sorry I suggested his coming.

COLONEL. My dear, we *ought* to have champagne in the house—in case of accident.

MRS. GWYN. [*Shaking him gently by the coat.*] No, *please*, Uncle Tom!

MRS. HOPE. [*Suddenly.*] Now, I've told your Uncle, Molly, that he's not to go in for this gold mine without making certain it's a good thing. Mind, I think you've been very rash. I'm going to give you a good talking to; and that's not all—you oughtn't to go about like this with a young man; he's not at all bad looking. I remember him perfectly well at the Fleming's dance.

[*On* MRS. GWYN'S *lips there comes a little mocking smile.*

COLONEL. [*Pulling his wife's sleeve.*] Nell!

MRS. HOPE. No, Tom, I'm going to talk to Molly; she's old enough to know better.

MRS. GWYN. Yes?

MRS. HOPE. Yes, and you'll get yourself into a mess; I don't approve of it, and when I see a thing I don't approve of——

COLONEL. [*Walking about, and pulling his moustache.*] Nell, I won't have it, I simply won't have it.

MRS. HOPE. What rate of interest are these Preference Shares to pay?

MRS. GWYN. [*Still smiling.*] Ten per cent.

MRS. HOPE. What did I tell you, Tom? And are they safe?

MRS. GWYN. You'd better ask Maurice.

MRS. HOPE. There, you see, you call him Maurice! Now supposing your Uncle went in for some of them——

COLONEL. [*Taking off his hat—in a high, hot voice.*] I'm not going in for anything of the sort.

MRS. HOPE. Don't swing your hat by the brim! Go and look if you can see him coming!

[*The* COLONEL *goes.*]

[*In a lower voice.*] Your Uncle's getting very bald. I've only shoulder of lamb for lunch, and a salad. It's lucky it's too hot to eat.

[MISS BEECH *has appeared while she is speaking.*] Here she is, Peachey!

MISS BEECH. I see her. [*She kisses* MRS. GWYN, *and looks at her intently.*]

MRS. GWYN. [*Shrugging her shoulders.*] Well, Peachey! What d'you make of me?

COLONEL. [*Returning from his search.*] There's a white hat crossing the second stile. Is that your friend, Molly?

[MRS. GWYN *nods.*

MRS. HOPE. Oh! before I forget, Peachey—Letty and Ernest can move their things back again. I'm going to put Mr. Lever in *your* room. [*Catching sight*

of the paint pot on the ground.] There's that disgusting paint-pot! Take it up at once, Tom, and put it in the tree.

[*The* COLONEL *picks up the pot and bears it to the hollow tree followed by* MRS. HOPE; *he enters.*

MRS. HOPE. [*Speaking into the tree.*] Not *there!*

COLONEL. [*From within.*] Well, where then?

MRS. HOPE. Why—up—oh! gracious!

[MRS. GWYN, *standing alone, is smiling.* LEVER *approaches from the towing-path. He is a man like a fencer's wrist, supple and steely. A man whose age is difficult to tell, with a quick, good-looking face, and a line between his brows; his darkish hair is flecked with grey. He gives the feeling that he has always had to spurt to keep pace with his own life.*

MRS. HOPE. [*Also entering the hollow tree.*] No—oh:

COLONEL. [*From the depths, in a high voice.*] Well, dash it then! What *do* you want?

MRS. GWYN. Peachey, may I introduce Mr. Lever to you? Miss Beech, my old governess.

[*They shake each other by the hand.*

LEVER. How do you do?

[*His voice is pleasant, his manner easy.*

MISS BEECH. Pleased to meet you.

[*Her manner is that of one who is not pleased. She watches.*

MRS. GWYN. [*Pointing to the tree—maliciously.*] This is my uncle and my aunt. They're taking exercise, I think.

[*The* COLONEL *and* MRS. HOPE *emerge convulsively. They are very hot.* LEVER *and* MRS. GWYN *are very cool.*

MRS. HOPE. [*Shaking hands with him.*] So you've got here! Aren't you very hot?—Tom!

COLONEL. Brought a splendid day with you! Splendid!

[*As he speaks,* JOY *comes running with a bunch of roses; seeing* LEVER, *she stops and stands quite rigid.*

MISS BEECH. [*Sitting in the swing.*] Thunder!

COLONEL. Thunder? Nonsense, Peachey, you're always imagining something. Look at the sky!

MISS BEECH. Thunder!

[MRS. GWYN'S *smile has faded.*

MRS. HOPE. [*Turning.*] Joy, don't you see Mr. Lever?

[JOY, *turning to her mother, gives her the roses. With a forced smile,* LEVER *advances, holding out his hand.*

LEVER. How are you, Joy? Haven't seen you for an age!

JOY. [*Without expression.*] I am very well, thank you.

[*She raises her hand, and just touches his.* MRS. GYWN'S *eyes are fixed on her daughter.* MISS BEECH *is watching them intently;* MRS. HOPE *is buttoning the* COLONEL'S *coat.*

The curtain falls.

ACT II

[*It is afternoon, and at a garden-table placed beneath the hollow tree, the Colonel is poring over plans. Astride of a garden-chair,* LEVER *is smoking cigarettes. Dick is hanging Chinese lanterns to the hollow tree.*

LEVER. Of course, if this level [*pointing with his cigarette*] peters out to the West we shall be in a tightish place; you know what a mine is at this stage, Colonel Hope?

COLONEL. [*Absently.*] Yes, yes. [*Tracing a line.*] What is there to prevent its running out here to the *East?*

LEVER. Well, nothing, except that as a matter of fact it doesn't.

COLONEL. [*With some excitement.*] I'm *very glad* you showed me these papers, very glad! *I* say that it's a most astonishing thing if the ore suddenly stops there. [*A gleam of humour visits* LEVER'S *face.*] I'm not an expert, but you ought to prove that ground to the East more thoroughly.

LEVER. [*Quizzically.*] Of course sir, if you advise that——

COLONEL. If it were *mine,* I'd no more sit down

under the belief that the ore stopped there, than I'd—— There's a harmony in these things.

LEVER. I can only tell you what our experts say.

COLONEL. Ah! Experts! No faith in them—never had! Miners, lawyers, theologians, cowardly lot—pays them to be cowardly. When they haven't their own axes to grind, they've got their theories; a theory's a dangerous thing. [*He loses himself in contemplation of the papers.*] Now *my* theory is, you're in strata here of what we call the Triassic Age.

LEVER. [*Smiling faintly.*] Ah!

COLONEL. You've struck a fault, that's what's happened. The ore may be as much as thirty or forty yards out; but it's there, depend on it.

LEVER. Would you back that opinion, Sir?

COLONEL. [*With dignity.*] I never give an opinion that I'm not prepared to back. I want to get to the *bottom* of this. What's to prevent the gold going down *indefinitely?*

LEVER. Nothing, so far as I know.

COLONEL. [*With suspicion.*] Eh!

LEVER. All I can tell you is: This is as far as we've got, and we want more money before we can get any further.

COLONEL. [*Absently.*] Yes, yes; that's very usual.

LEVER. If you ask my personal opinion I think it's very doubtful that the gold does go down.

COLONEL. [*Smiling.*] Oh! a *personal* opinion—on a matter of this sort!

LEVER. [*As though about to take the papers.*] Per-

haps we'd better close the sitting, Sir; sorry to have bored you.

COLONEL. Now, now! Don't be so touchy! If I'm to put money in, I'm bound to look at it all round.

LEVER. [*With lifted brows.*] Please don't imagine that I *want* you to put money in.

COLONEL. Confound it, sir! D'you suppose I take you for a Company promoter?

LEVER. Thank you!

COLONEL. [*Looking at him doubtfully.*] You've got Irish blood in you—um? You're so hasty!

LEVER. If you're really thinking of taking shares —my advice to you is, don't!

COLONEL. [*Regretfully.*] If this were an ordinary gold mine, I wouldn't dream of looking at it, I want you to understand that. Nobody has a greater objection to gold mines than I.

LEVER. [*Looks down at his host with half-closed eyes.*] But it *is* a gold mine, Colonel Hope.

COLONEL. I know, I know; but I've been into it for *myself*; I've formed my *opinion personally*. Now, what's the reason you don't want me to invest?

LEVER. Well, if it doesn't turn out as you expect, you'll say it's my doing. I know what investors are.

COLONEL. [*Dubiously.*] If it were a Westralian or a Kaffir I wouldn't touch it with a pair of tongs! It's not as if I were going to put much in! [*He suddenly*

bends above the papers as though magnetically attracted.] *I like* these Triassic formations!

[DICK, *who has hung the last lantern, moodily departs.*

LEVER. [*Looking after him.*] That young man seems depressed.

COLONEL. [*As though remembering his principles.*] I don't like mines, never have! [*Suddenly absorbed again.*] I tell you what, Lever—this thing's got tremendous possibilities. You don't seem to believe in it enough. No mine's any good without faith; until I see for *myself*, however, I shan't commit myself beyond a thousand.

LEVER. Are you serious, sir?

COLONEL. Certainly! I've been thinking it over ever since you told me Henty had fought shy. I've a poor opinion of Henty. He's one of those fellows that says one thing and does another. An opportunist!

LEVER. [*Slowly.*] I'm afraid we're all that, more or less. [*He sits beneath the hollow tree.*

COLONEL. A man never knows what he is himself. There's my wife. She thinks she's—— By the way, don't say anything to her about this, please. And, Lever [*nervously*], I don't think, you know, this is *quite* the sort of thing for my niece.

LEVER. [*Quietly.*] I agree. I mean to get her out of it.

COLONEL. [*A little taken aback.*] Ah! You know, she—she's in a very delicate position, living by her-

self in London. [LEVER *looks at him ironically.*] You [*very nervously*] see a good deal of her? If it hadn't been for Joy growing so fast, we shouldn't have had the child down here. Her Mother ought to have her with her. Eh! Don't you think so?

LEVER. [*Forcing a smile.*] Mrs. Gwyn always seems to me to get on all right.

COLONEL. [*As though making a discovery.*] You know, I've found that when a woman's living alone and unprotected, the very least thing will set a lot of hags and jackanapes talking. [*Hotly.*] The more unprotected and helpless a woman is, the more they revel in it. If there's anything I hate in this world, it's those wretched creatures who babble about their neighbours' affairs.

LEVER. I agree with you.

COLONEL. One ought to be very careful not to give them—that is [*checks himself confused; then hurrying on*]—I suppose you and Joy get on all right?

LEVER. [*Coolly.*] Pretty well, thanks. I'm not exactly in Joy's line; haven't seen very much of her, in fact.

[MISS BEECH *and* JOY *have been approaching from the house. But seeing* LEVER, JOY *turns abruptly, hesitates a moment, and with an angry gesture goes away.*

COLONEL [*Unconscious.*] Wonderfully affectionate little thing! Well, she'll be going home to-morrow!

MISS BEECH. [*Who has been gazing after* JOY.] Talkin' business, poor creatures?

LEVER. Oh, no! If you'll excuse me, I'll wash my hands before tea.

[*He glances at the* COLONEL *poring over papers, and, shrugging his shoulders, strolls away.*

MISS BEECH. [*Sitting in the swing.*] I see your horrid papers.

COLONEL. Be quiet, Peachey!

MISS BEECH. On a beautiful summer's day, too.

COLONEL. That'll do now.

MISS BEECH. [*Unmoved.*] For every ounce you take out of a gold mine you put two in.

COLONEL, Who told you that rubbish?

MISS BEECH. [*With devilry.*] *You did!*

COLONEL. This isn't an ordinary gold mine.

MISS BEECH. Oh! quite a *special* thing.

[COLONEL *stares at her, but subsiding at her impassivity he pores again the over papers.*

[ROSE *has approached with a tea cloth.*

ROSE. If you please, sir, the missis told me to lay the tea.

COLONEL. Go away! Ten fives fifty. Ten 5-16ths, Peachey?

MISS BEECH. I hate your nasty sums!

[ROSE *goes away. The* COLONEL *writes.* MRS. HOPE'S *voice is heard, "Now then, bring those chairs, you two. Not that one, Ernest."* ERNEST *and* LETTY *appear through the openings of the wall, each with a chair*

COLONEL. [*With dull exasperation.*] What do *you* want!

LETTY. Tea, father.

[*She places her chair and goes away.*

ERNEST. That Johnny-bird Lever is too cocksure for me, Colonel. Those South American things are no good at all. I know all about *them* from young Scrotton. There's not one that's worth a red cent. If you want a flutter——

COLONEL. [*Explosively.*] Flutter! I'm not a gambler, sir!

ERNEST. Well, Colonel [*with a smile*], I only don't want you to chuck your money away on a stiff 'un. If you want anything good you should go to Mexico.

COLONEL. [*Jumping up and holding out the map.*] Go to—— [*He stops in time.*] What d'you call that, eh? M-E-X——

ERNEST. [*Not to be embarrassed.*] It all depends on what part.

COLONEL. You think you know everything—you think nothing's right unless it's your own idea! Be good enough to keep your advice to yourself.

ERNEST. [*Moving with his chair, and stopping with a smile.*] If you ask me, I should say it wasn't playing the game to put Molly into a thing like that.

COLONEL. What do you mean, sir?

ERNEST. Any Juggins can see that she's a bit gone on our friend.

COLONEL. [*Freezingly.*] Indeed!

ERNEST. He's not at all the sort of Johnny that appeals to me.

COLONEL. Really?

ERNEST. [*Unmoved.*] If I were you, Colonel, I should tip her the wink. He was hanging about her at Ascot all the time. It's a bit thick!

[MRS. HOPE *followed by* ROSE *appears from the house.*

COLONEL. [*Stammering with passion.*] Jackanapes!

MRS. HOPE. Don't stand there, Tom; clear those papers, and let Rose lay the table. Now, Ernest, go and get another chair.

[*The* COLONEL *looks wildly round and sits beneath the hollow tree, with his head held in his hands. Rose lays the cloth.*

MISS BEECH. [*Sitting beside the* COLONEL.] Poor creature!

ERNEST. [*Carrying his chair about with him.*] Ask any Johnny in the City, he'll tell you Mexico's a very tricky country—the people are awful rotters—

MRS. HOPE. Put that chair down, Ernest.

[ERNEST *looks at the chair, puts it down, opens his mouth, and goes away.* ROSE *follows him.*] What's he been talking about? You oughtn't to get so excited, Tom; is your head bad, old man? Here, take these papers! [*She hands the papers to the* COLONEL.] Peachey, go in and tell them tea'll be ready in a minute, there's a good soul! Oh! and on my dressing-table you'll find a bottle of Eau de Cologne——

MISS BEECH. Don't let him get in a temper again? That's three times to-day!

[*She goes towards the house.*

COLONEL. Never met such a fellow in my life, the most opinionated, narrow-minded—thinks he knows everything. Whatever Letty could see in him I can't think. Pragmatical beggar!

MRS. HOPE. Now Tom! What have you been up to, to get into a state like this?

COLONEL. [*Avoiding her eyes.*] I shall lose my temper with him one of these days. He's got that confounded habit of thinking nobody can be right but himself.

MRS. HOPE. That's enough! I want to talk to you seriously! Dick's in love. I'm perfectly certain of it.

COLONEL. Love! Who's he in love with—Peachey?

MRS. HOPE. You can see it all over him. If I saw any signs of Joy's breaking out, I'd send them both away. I simply won't have it.

COLONEL. Why, she's a child!

MRS. HOPE. [*Pursuing her own thoughts.*] But she isn't—not yet. I've been watching her very carefully. She's more in love with her Mother than any one, follows her about like a dog! She's been quite rude to Mr. Lever.

COLONEL. [*Pursuing his own thoughts.*] I don't believe a word of it. [*He rises and walks about*

MRS. HOPE. Don't believe a word of what?

[*The* COLONEL *is silent.*]

[*Pursuing his thoughts with her own.*] If I thought there were anything between Molly and Mr. Lever d'you suppose I'd have him in the house?

[THE COLONEL *stops, and gives a sort of grunt.*] He's a very nice fellow; and I want you to pump him well, Tom, and see what there is in this mine.

COLONEL. [*Uneasily.*] Pump!

MRS. HOPE. [*Looking at him curiously.*] Yes, you've been up to something! Now what is it?

COLONEL. Pump my own guest! I never heard of such a thing!

MRS. HOPE. There you are on your high horse! I do wish you had a little common sense, Tom!

COLONEL. I'd as soon you asked me to sneak about eavesdropping! Pump!

MRS. HOPE. Well, what were you looking at these papers for? It does drive me so wild the way you throw away all the chances you have of making a little money. I've got you this opportunity, and you do nothing but rave up and down, and talk nonsense!

COLONEL. [*In a high voice.*] Much you know about it! I've taken a thousand shares in this mine!

[*He stops dead. There is a silence.*

MRS. HOPE. You've—WHAT? Without consulting me? Well, then, you'll just go and take them out again!

COLONEL. You want me to——?

MRS. HOPE. The idea! As if you could trust your judgment in a thing like that! You'll just

go at once and say there was a mistake; then we'll talk it over calmly.

COLONEL. [*Drawing himself up.*] Go back on what I've said? Not if I lose every penny! First you worry me to take the shares, and then you worry me not—I won't have it, Nell, I won't have it!

MRS. HOPE. Well, if I'd thought you'd have forgotten what you said this morning and turned about like this, d'you suppose I'd have spoken to you at all. Now, *do* you?

COLONEL. Rubbish! If you can't see that this is a special opportunity!

[*He walks away followed by* MRS. HOPE, *who endeavours to make him see her point of view.* ERNEST *and* LETTY *are now returning from the house armed with a third chair.*

LETTY. What's the matter with everybody? Is it the heat?

ERNEST. [*Preoccupied and sitting in the swing.*] That sportsman, Lever, you know, ought to be warned off.

[ROSE *has followed with the tea tray.*

LETTY. [*Signing to* ERNEST.] Where's Miss Joy, Rose?

ROSE. Don't know, Miss.

[*Putting down the tray, she goes.*

LETTY. Ernie, be careful, you never know where Joy is.

ERNEST. [*Preoccupied with his reflections.*] Your old Dad's as mad as a hatter with me.

LETTY. Why?

ERNEST. Well, I merely said what I thought, that Molly ought to look out what she's doing, and he dropped on me like a cartload of bricks.

LETTY. The Dad's very fond of Molly.

ERNEST. But look here, d'you mean to tell me that she and Lever aren't——

LETTY. Don't! Suppose they are! If Joy were to hear it'd be simply awful. I *like* Molly. *I'm* not going to believe anything against her. I don't see the use of it. If it is, it is, and if it isn't, it isn't.

ERNEST. Well, all I know is that when I told her the mine was probably a frost she went for me like steam.

LETTY. Well, so should I. She was only sticking up for her friends.

ERNEST. Ask the old Peachey-bird. She knows a thing or two. Look here, I don't mind a man's being a bit of a sportsman, but I think Molly's bringin' him down here is too thick. Your old dad's got one of his notions that because this Josser's his guest, he must keep him in a glass case, and take shares in his mine, and all the rest of it.

LETTY. I do think people are horrible, always thinking things. It's not as if Molly were a stranger. She's *my own cousin.* I'm not going to believe anything about my own cousin. I simply *won't.*

ERNEST. [*Reluctantly realising the difference that this makes.*] I suppose it *does* make a difference, her bein' your cousin.

LETTY. Of course it does! I only hope to goodness no one will make Joy suspect——

[*She stops and puts her finger to her lips, for* JOY *is coming towards them, as the tea-bell sounds. She is followed by* DICK *and* MISS BEECH *with the Eau de Cologne.* THE COLONEL *and* MRS. HOPE *are also coming back, discussing still each other's point of view.*

JOY. Where's Mother? Isn't she here?

MRS. HOPE. Now Joy, come and sit down; your mother's been told tea's ready; if she lets it get cold it's her look out.

DICK. [*Producing a rug, and spreading it beneath the tree.*] Plenty of room, Joy.

JOY. I don't believe Mother knows, Aunt Nell.

[MRS. GWYN *and* LEVER *appear in the opening of the wall.*

LETTY. [*Touching* ERNEST'S *arm.*] Look, Ernie! Four couples and Peachey——

ERNEST. [*Preoccupied.*] What couples?

JOY. Oh! Mums, here you are!

[*Seizing her, she turns her back on* LEVER. *They sit in various seats, and* MRS. HOPE *pours out the tea.*

MRS. HOPE. Hand the sandwiches to Mr. Lever, Peachey. It's our own jam, Mr. Lever.

LEVER. Thanks. [*He takes a bite.*] It's splendid!

MRS. GWYN. [*With forced gaiety.*] It's the first time I've ever seen you eat jam.

LEVER. [*Smiling a forced smile.*] Really! But I love it.

MRS. GWYN. [*With a little bow.*] You always refuse mine.

JOY. [*Who has been staring at her enemy, suddenly.*] I'm all burnt up! Aren't you simply boiled, Mother?

[*She touches her Mother's forehead.*

MRS. GWYN. Ugh! You're quite clammy, Joy.

JOY. It's enough to make any one clammy.

[*Her eyes go back to* LEVER'S *face as though to stab him.*

ERNEST. [*From the swing.*] I say, you know, the glass is going down.

LEVER. [*Suavely.*] The glass in the hall's steady enough.

ERNEST. Oh, I never go by that; that's a rotten old glass.

COLONEL. Oh! is it?

ERNEST. [*Paying no attention.*] *I've* got a little ripper—never puts you in the cart. Bet you what you like we have thunder before to-morrow night.

MISS BEECH. [*Removing her gaze from* JOY *to* LEVER.] You don't think we shall have it before to-night, do you?

LEVER. [*Suavely.*] I beg your pardon; did you speak to me?

MISS BEECH. I said, you don't think we shall have the thunder before to-night, do you?

[*She resumes her watch on* JOY.

LEVER. [*Blandly.*] Really, I don't see any signs of it.

[JOY, *crossing to the rug, flings herself down. And* DICK *sits cross-legged, with his eyes fast fixed on her.*

MISS BEECH. [*Eating.*] People don't often see what they don't want to, do they?

[LEVER *only lifts his brows.*

MRS. GWYN. [*Quickly breaking in.*] What *are* you talking about? The weather's perfect.

MISS BEECH. Isn't it.

MRS. HOPE. You'd better make a good tea, Peachey; nobody'll get anything till eight, and then only cold shoulder. You must just put up with no hot dinner, Mr. Lever.

LEVER. [*Boring.*] Whatever is good enough for Miss Beech is good enough for me.

MISS BEECH. [*Sardonically—taking another sandwich.*] So you think!

MRS. GWYN. [*With forced gaiety.*] Don't be so absurd, Peachey.

[MISS BEECH *grunts slightly.*

COLONEL. [*Once more busy with his papers.*] I see the name of your engineer is Rodriguez—Italian, eh?

LEVER. Portuguese.

COLONEL. Don't like that!

LEVER. I believe he was born in England.

COLONEL. [*Reassured.*] Oh, was he? Ah!

ERNEST. Awful rotters, those Portuguese!

COLONEL. There you go!

LETTY. Well, Father, Ernie only said what you said.

MRS. HOPE. Now I want to ask you, Mr. Lever, is this gold mine safe? If it isn't—I simply won't allow Tom to take these shares; he can't afford it.

LEVER. It rather depends on what you call safe, Mrs. Hope.

MRS. HOPE. I don't want anything extravagant, of course; if they're going to pay their 10 per cent. regularly, and Tom can have his money out at any time—— [*There is a faint whistle from the swing.*] I only want to know that it's a thoroughly genuine thing.

MRS. GWYN. [*Indignantly.*] As if Maurice would be a director if it wasn't?

MRS. HOPE. Now Molly, I'm simply asking——

MRS. GWYN. Yes, you are!

COLONEL. [*Rising.*] I'll take two thousand of those shares, Lever. To have my wife talk like that—I'm quite ashamed.

LEVER. Oh, come, sir, Mrs. Hope only meant——

[MRS. GWYN *looks eagerly at* LEVER.

DICK. [*Quietly.*] Let's go on the river, Joy.

[JOY *rises, and goes to her Mother's chair.*

MRS. HOPE. Of course! What rubbish, Tom! As if any one ever invested money without making sure!

LEVER. [*Ironically.*] It seems a little difficult to make sure in this case. There isn't the smallest

necessity for Colonel Hope to take any shares, and it looks to me as if he'd better not.

[*He lights a cigarette.*

Mrs. Hope. Now, Mr. Lever, don't be offended! I'm very anxious for Tom to take the shares if you say the thing's so good.

Lever. I'm afraid I must ask to be left out, please.

Joy. [*Whispering.*] Mother, if you've finished, do come, I want to show you my room.

Mrs. Hope. I wouldn't say a word, only Tom's so easily taken in.

Mrs. Gwyn. [*Fiercely.*] Aunt Nell, how *can* you?

[Joy *gives a little savage laugh.*

Letty. [*Hastily.*] Ernie, will you play Dick and me? Come on, Dick! [*All three go out towards the lawn.*

Mrs. Hope. You ought to know your Uncle by this time, Molly. He's just like a child. He'd be a pauper to-morrow if I didn't see to things.

Colonel. Understand once for all that I shall take two thousand shares in this mine. I'm—I'm humiliated. [*He turns and goes towards the house.*

Mrs. Hope. Well, what on earth have I said?

[*She hurries after him.*

Mrs. Gwyn. [*In a low voice as she passes.*] You needn't insult my friends!

[Lever, *shrugging his shoulders, has strolled aside.* Joy, *with a passionate movement seen only by* Miss Beech, *goes off towards the house.* Miss Beech *and* Mrs. Gwyn *are left alone beside the remnants of the feast.*

MISS BEECH. Molly! [MRS. GWYN *looks up startled.*] Take care, Molly, take care! The child! Can't you see? [*Apostrophizing* LEVER.] Take care, Molly, take care!

LEVER. [*Coming back.*] Awfully hot, isn't it?

MISS BEECH. Ah! and it'll be hotter if we don't mind.

LEVER. [*Suavely.*] Do we control these things?

[MISS BEECH *looking from face to face, nods her head repeatedly; then gathering her skirts she walks towards the house.* MRS. GWYN *sits motionless, staring before her.*]

Extraordinary old lady! [*He pitches away his cigarette.*] What's the matter with her, Molly?

MRS. GWYN. [*With an effort.*] Oh! Peachey's a character!

LEVER. [*Frowning.*] So I see! [*There is a silence.*

MRS. GWYN. Maurice!

LEVER. Yes.

MRS. GWYN. Aunt Nell's hopeless, yo' mustn't mind her.

LEVER. [*In a dubious and ironic voice.*] My dear girl, I've too much to bother me to mind trifles like that.

MRS. GWYN. [*Going to him suddenly.*] Tell *me*, won't you? [LEVER *shrugs his shoulders.*] A month ago you'd have told me soon enough!

LEVER. Now, Molly!

MRS. GWYN. Ah! [*With a bitter smile.*] The Spring's soon over.

LEVER. It's always Spring between us.

MRS. GWYN. Is it?

LEVER. You didn't tell me what *you* were thinking about just now when you sat there like stone.

MRS. GWYN. It doesn't do for a *woman* to say too much.

LEVER. Have I been so bad to you that you need feel like that, Molly?

MRS. GWYN. [*With a little warm squeeze of his arm.*] Oh! my *dear,* it's only that I'm so—— [*She stops.*

LEVER. [*Gently*]. So what?

MRS. GWYN. [*In a low voice.*] It's hateful here.

LEVER. I didn't want to come. I don't understand why you suggested it. [MRS. GWYN *is silent.*] It's been a mistake!

MRS. GWYN. [*Her eyes fixed on the ground.*] Joy comes *home* to-morrow. I thought if I brought you here—I should know——

LEVER. [*Vexedly.*] Um!

MRS. GWYN. [*Losing her control.*] Can't you *see?* It haunts me? How are we to go on? I must know—I must know!

LEVER. I don't see that my coming——

MRS. GWYN. I thought I should have more confidence; I thought I should be able to face it better in London, if you came down here openly—and now —I feel I mustn't speak or look at you.

LEVER. You don't think your Aunt——

MRS. GWYN. [*Scornfully.*] She! It's only Joy I care about.

LEVER. [*Frowning.*] We must be more careful, that's all. We mustn't give ourselves away again as we were doing just now.

MRS. GWYN. When any one says anything horrid to you, I can't help it.

[*She puts her hand on the lappel of his coat.*

LEVER. My dear child, take care!

[MRS. GWYN *drops her hand. She throws her head back, and her throat is seen to work as though she were gulping down a bitter draught. She moves away.*]

[*Following hastily.*] Don't dear, don't! I only meant —— Come, Molly, let's be sensible. I want to tell you something about the mine.

MRS. GWYN. [*With a quavering smile.*] Yes—let's talk sensibly, and walk properly in this sensible, proper place.

[LEVER *is seen trying to soothe her, and yet to walk properly. As they disappear, they are viewed by* JOY, *who like the shadow parted from its figure, has come to join it again. She stands now, foiled, a carnation in her hand; then flings herself on a chair, and leans her elbows on the table.*

JOY. I hate him! Pig!

ROSE. [*Who has come to clear the tea things.*] Did you call, Miss?

JOY. Not you!

ROSE. [*Motionless.*] No, Miss!

JOY. [*Leaning back and tearing the flower.*] Oh! do hurry up, ROSE!

ROSE. [*Collects the tea things.*] Mr. Dick's coming down the path! Aren't I going to get you to do your frock, Miss Joy?

JOY. No.

ROSE. What will the Missis say?

JOY. Oh, *don't* be so stuck, Rose!

[ROSE *goes, but* DICK *has come.*

DICK. Come on the river, Joy, just for half an hour, as far as the kingfishers—do! [JOY *shakes her head.*] Why not? It'll be so jolly and cool. I'm most awfully sorry if I worried you this morning. I didn't mean to. I won't again, I promise. [JOY *slides a look at him, and from that look he gains a little courage.*] *Do* come! It'll be the last time. *I* feel it awfully, Joy.

JOY. There's nothing to hurt *you!*

DICK. [*Gloomily.*] Isn't there—when you're like this?

JOY. [*In a hard voice.*] If you don't like me, why do you follow me about?

DICK. What *is* the matter?

JOY. [*Looking up, as if for want of air.*] Oh! Don't!

DICK. Oh, Joy, what *is* the matter? Is it the heat?

JOY. [*With a little laugh.*] Yes.

DICK. Have some Eau de Cologne. I'll make you a bandage. [*He takes the Eau de Cologne, and makes a bandage with his handkerchief.*] It's *quite* clean.

JOY. Oh, Dick, you are so funny!

DICK. [*Bandaging her forehead.*] I can t bear *you* to feel bad; it puts me off completely. I mean I don't generally make a fuss about people, but when it's *you*——

JOY. [*Suddenly.*] I'm all right.

DICK. Is that comfy?

JOY. [*With her chin up, and her eyes fast closed.*] Quite.

DICK. I'm not going to stay and worry you. You ought to rest. Only, Joy! Look here! If you want me to do *anything* for you, *any* time——

JOY. [*Half opening her eyes.*] Only to go away.

[DICK *bites his lips and walks away.* Dick—[*softly*]—Dick! [DICK *stops.*] I didn't mean that; will you get me some water-irises for this evening?

DICK. Won't I? [*He goes to the hollow tree and from its darkness takes a bucket and a boat-hook.*] I know where there are some rippers!

[JOY *stays unmoving with her eyes half closed.*] Are you sure you're all right, Joy? You'll just rest here in the shade, won't you, till I come back; it'll do you no end of good. I shan't be twenty minutes.

[*He goes, but cannot help returning softly, to make sure.*]

You're *quite* sure you're all right?

[JOY *nods. He goes away towards the river. But there is no rest for* JOY. *The voices of* MRS. GWYN *and* LEVER *are heard returning.*

JOY. [*With a gesture of anger.*] Hateful! Hateful!
[*She runs away.*

[MRS. GWYN *and* LEVER *are seen approaching they pass the tree, in conversation.*

MRS. GWYN. But I don't see why, Maurice.

LEVER. We mean to sell the mine; we must do some more work on it, and for that we must have money.

MRS. GWYN. If you only want a little, I should have thought you could have got it in a minute in the City.

LEVER. [*Shaking his head.*] No, no; we must get it privately.

MRS. GWYN. [*Doubtfully.*] Oh! [*She slowly adds.*] Then it isn't such a good thing!
[*And she does not look at him.*

LEVER. Well, we mean to sell it.

MRS. GWYN. What about the people who buy?

LEVER. [*Dubiously regarding her.*] My dear girl, they've just as much chance as *we* had. It's not my business to think of them. There's *your* thousand pounds——

MRS. GWYN. [*Softly.*] Don't bother about *my* money, Maurice. I don't want you to do anything not quite——

LEVER. [*Evasively.*] Oh! There's my brother's and my sister's too. I'm not going to let any of you run any risk. When we all went in for it the thing looked splendid; it's only the last month that we've had doubts. What bothers me now is your Uncle.

I don't want him to take these shares. It looks as if I'd come here on purpose.

MRS. GWYN. Oh! he *mustn't* take them!

LEVER. That's all very well; but it's not so simple.

MRS. GWYN. [*Shyly.*] But, Maurice, have you told him about the selling?

LEVER. [*Gloomily, under the hollow tree.*] It's a Board secret. I'd no business to tell even you.

MRS. GWYN. But he thinks he's taking shares in a good—a permanent thing.

LEVER. You can't go into a mining venture without some risk.

MRS. GWYN. Oh, yes, I know—but—but Uncle Tom is such a dear!

LEVER. [*Stubbornly.*] I can't help his being the sort of man he is. I didn't want him to take these shares, I told him so in so many words. Put yourself in my place, Molly, how can I go to him and say—"This thing may turn out rotten," when he knows I got you to put your money into it?

[*But* JOY, *the lost shadow, has come back. She moves forward resolutely. They are divided from her by the hollow tree; she is unseen. She stops.*

MRS. GWYN. I think he *ought* to be told about the selling; it's not fair.

LEVER. What on earth made him rush at the thing like that? I don't understand that kind of man?

MRS. GWYN. [*Impulsively.*] I *must* tell him, Maurice; I can't let him take the shares without——

[*She puts her hand on his arm.*

[JOY *turns, as if to go back whence she came, but stops once more.*

LEVER. [*Slowly and very quietly.*] I didn't think you'd give *me* away, Molly.

MRS. GWYN. I don't think I quite understand.

LEVER. If you tell the Colonel about this sale the poor old chap will think me a man that you ought to have nothing to do with. Do you want that?

[MRS. GWYN, *giving her lover a long look, touches his sleeve.* JOY, *slipping behind the hollow tree, has gone.*]

You can't act in a case like this as if you'd only a *principle* to consider. It's the—the *special circumstances*——

MRS. GWYN. [*With a faint smile.*] But you'll be glad to get the money, won't you?

LEVER. By George, if you're going to take it like this, Molly!

MRS. GWYN. Don't!

LEVER. We may not sell after all, dear, we may find it turn out trumps.

MRS. GWYN. [*With a shiver.*] I don't want to hear any more. I know women don't understand. [*Impulsively.*] It's only that I can't bear any one should think that *you*——

LEVER. [*Distressed.*] For goodness' sake, don't look

like that, Molly! Of course, I'll speak to your Uncle. I'll stop him somehow, even if I have to make a fool of myself. I'll do anything you want——

MRS. GWYN. I feel as if I were being smothered here.

LEVER. It's only for one day.

MRS. GWYN. [*With sudden tenderness.*] It's not your fault, dear. I ought to have known how it would be. Well, let's go in!

[*She sets her lips, and walks towards the house with* LEVER *following. But no sooner has she disappeared than* JOY *comes running after; she stops, as though throwing down a challenge. Her cheeks and ears are burning.*

JOY. Mother!

[*After a moment* MRS. GWYN *reappears in the opening of the wall.*

MRS. GWYN. Oh! here you are!

JOY. [*Breathlessly.*] Yes.

MRS. GWYN. [*Uncertainly.*] Where—have you been? You look dreadfully hot; have you been running?

JOY. Yes—no.

MRS. GWYN. [*Looking at her fixedly.*] What's the matter—you're trembling! [*Softly.*] Aren't you well, dear?

JOY. Yes—I don't know.

MRS. GWYN. What *is* it, darling?

JOY. [*Suddenly clinging to her.*] Oh! Mother!

MRS GWYN. I don't understand.

JOY. [*Breathlessly.*] Oh, Mother, let me go back home with you now at once——

MRS. GWYN. [*Her face hardening.*] Why? What on earth——

JOY. I can't stay here.

MRS. GWYN. But why?

JOY. I want to be with *you*—Oh! Mother, don't you love me?

MRS. GWYN. [*With a faint smile.*] Of course I love you, Joy.

JOY. Ah! but you love *him* more.

MRS. GWYN. Love him—whom?

JOY. Oh! Mother, I didn't——[*She tries to take her Mother's hand, but fails.*] Oh! *don't.*

MRS. GWYN. You'd better explain what you mean, I think.

JOY. I want to get you to—he—he's—he's—not——!

MRS. GWYN. [*Frigidly.*] Really, Joy!

JOY. [*Passionately.*] I'll fight against him, and I know there's something wrong about——

[*She stops.*

MRS. GWYN. About what?

JOY. Let's tell Uncle Tom, Mother, and go away.

MRS. GWYN. Tell Uncle Tom—what?

JOY. [*Looking down and almost whispering.*] About—about—the mine.

MRS. GWYN. What about the mine? What do you mean? [*Fiercely.*] Have you been spying on me?

JOY. [*Shrinking.*] No! oh, no!

MRS. GWYN. Where were you?

JOY. [*Just above her breath.*] I—I heard something

MRS. GWYN. [*Bitterly.*] But you were not spying?

JOY. I wasn't—I wasn't! I didn't want—to hear I only heard a little. I couldn't help listening, Mother.

MRS. GWYN. [*With a little laugh.*] Couldn't help listening?

JOY. [*Through her teeth.*] I *hate him.* I didn't mean to listen, but I hate him.

MRS. GWYN. I see. [*There is a silence.*] Why do you hate him?

JOY. He—he—— [*She stops.*

MRS. GWYN. Yes?

JOY. [*With a sort of despair.*] I don't know. Oh! I *don't know!* But I feel——

MRS. GWYN. I can't reason with you. As to what you heard, it's—ridiculous.

JOY. It's not that. It's—it's you!

MRS. GWYN. [*Stonily.*] I don't know what you mean.

JOY. [*Passionately.*] I wish Dad were here!

MRS. GWYN. Do you love your Father as much as me?

JOY. Oh! Mother, no—you *know* I don't.

MRS. GWYN. [*Resentfully.*] Then why do you want him?

JOY. [*Almost under her breath.*] Because of that man.

MRS. GWYN. Indeed!

JOY. I will never—never make friends with him.

MRS. GWYN. [*Cuttingly.*] I have not asked you to.

JOY. [*With a blind movement of her hand.*] Oh, Mother!

[MRS. GWYN *half turns away.*]

Mother—won't you? Let's tell Uncle Tom, and go away from him?

MRS. GWYN. If you were not a child, Joy, you wouldn't say such things.

JOY. [*Eagerly.*] I'm not a child, I'm—I'm a woman. I *am.*

MRS. GWYN. No! You—are—*not* a woman, Joy.

[*She sees* JOY *throw up her arms as though warding off a blow, and turning finds that* LEVER *is standing in the opening of the wall.*

LEVER. [*Looking from face to face.*] What's the matter? [*There is no answer.*] What is it, Joy?

JOY. [*Passionately.*] I heard you, I don't care who knows. I'd listen again.

LEVER. [*Impassively.*] Ah! and what did I say that was so very dreadful?

JOY. You're a—a—you're a—coward!

MRS. GWYN. [*With a sort of groan.*] Joy!

LEVER. [*Stepping up to* JOY, *and standing with his hands behind him—in a low voice.*] Now, hit me in the face—hit me—hit me as hard as you can. Go on, Joy, it'll do you good.

[JOY *raises her clenched hand, but drops it, and hides her face.*]

Why don't you? I'm not pretending!

[JOY *makes no sign.*]

Come Joy; you'll make yourself ill, and that won't help, will it?

[*But* JOY *still makes no sign.*]

[*With determination.*] What's the matter; now come—tell me!

JOY. [*In a stifled, sullen voice.*] Will you leave my mother alone?

MRS. GWYN. Oh! my dear Joy, don't be silly!

JOY. [*Wincing; then with sudden passion.*] I defy you—I defy you!

[*She rushes from their sight.*

MRS. GWYN. [*With a movement of distress.*] Oh!

LEVER. [*Turning to* MRS. GWYN *with a protecting gesture.*] Never mind, dear! It'll be—it'll be all right!

[*But the expression of his face is not the expression of his words.*

The curtain falls.

ACT III

[*It is evening; a full yellow moon is shining through the branches of the hollow tree. The Chinese lanterns are alight. There is dancing in the house; the music sounds now loud, now soft.* Miss Beech *is sitting on the rustic seat in a black bunchy evening dress, whose inconspicuous opening is inlaid with white. She slowly fans herself.*

[Dick *comes from the house in evening dress. He does not see* Miss Beech.

Dick. Curse! [*A short silence.*] Curse!

Miss Beech. Poor young man!

Dick. [*With a start.*] Well, Peachey, I can't help it [*He fumbles off his gloves.*

Miss Beech. Did you ever know any one that could?

Dick. [*Earnestly.*] It's such awfully hard lines on Joy. I can't get her out of my head, lying there with that beastly headache while everybody's jigging round.

Miss Beech. Oh! you don't mind about yourself —noble young man!

Dick. I should be a brute if I didn't mind more for her.

MISS BEECH. So you think it's a headache, do you?

DICK. Didn't you hear what Mrs. Gwyn said at dinner about the sun? [*With inspiration.*] I say, Peachey, couldn't you—couldn't you just go up and give her a message from me, and find out if there's anything she wants, and say how brutal it is that she's seedy; it would be most awfully decent of you. And tell her the dancing's no good without her. Do, Peachey, now do! Ah! and look here!

[*He dives into the hollow of the tree, and brings from out of it a pail of water, in which are placed two bottles of champagne, and some yellow irises—he takes the irises.*]

You might give her these. I got them specially for her, and I haven't had a chance.

MISS BEECH. [*Lifting a bottle.*] What's this?

DICK. Fizz. The Colonel brought it from the George. It's for supper; he put it in here because of—— [*Smiling faintly*] Mrs. Hope, I think. Peachey, *do* take her those irises.

MISS BEECH. D'you think they'll do her any good?

DICK. [*Crestfallen.*] I thought she'd like—— I don't want to worry her—you might try.

[MISS BEECH *shakes her head.*]

Why not?

MISS BEECH. The poor little creature won't let me in.

DICK. You've *been* up then!

MISS BEECH. [*Sharply.*] Of course I've been up. I've not got a stone for my heart, young man!

DICK. All right! I suppose I shall just have to get along somehow.

MISS BEECH. [*With devilry.*] That's what we've all got to do.

DICK. [*Gloomily.*] But this is too brutal for anything!

MISS BEECH. Worse than ever happened to any one!

DICK. I swear I'm not thinking of *myself.*

MISS BEECH. Did y'ever know anybody that swore they were?

DICK. Oh! shut up!

MISS BEECH. You'd better go in and get yourself a partner.

DICK. [*With pale desperation.*] Look here, Peachey, I simply loathe all those girls.

MISS BEECH. Ah—h! [*Ironically.*] Poor lot, aren't they?

DICK. All right; chaff away, it's good fun, isn't it? It makes me sick to dance when Joy's lying there. Her last night, too!

MISS BEECH. [*Sidling to him.*] You're a good young man, and you've got a good heart.

[*She takes his hand, and puts it to her cheek.*

DICK. Peachey—I say Peachey — d'you think there's—I mean d'you think there'll ever be any chance for me?

MISS BEECH. I *thought* that was coming! I don't approve of your making love at your time of life; don't you think I'm going to encourage you.

DICK. But I shall be of age in a year; my money's my own, it's not as if I had to ask any one's leave; and I mean, I *do* know my own mind.

MISS BEECH. Of course you do. Nobody else would at your age, but *you* do.

DICK. I wouldn't ask her to promise, it wouldn't be fair when she's so young, but I do want her to know that I shall never change.

MISS BEECH. And suppose—only suppose—she's fond of you, and says *she'll* never change.

DICK. Oh! Peachey! D'you think there's a chance of that—*do* you?

MISS BEECH. A—h—h!

DICK. I wouldn't let her bind herself, I swear I wouldn't. [*Solemnly.*] I'm not such a selfish brute as you seem to think.

MISS BEECH. [*Sidling close to him and in a violent whisper.*] Well—*have a go!*

DICK. Really? You *are* a brick, Peachey!

[*He kisses her.*

MISS BEECH. [*Yielding pleasurably; then remembering her principles.*] Don't you ever say I said so! You're too young, both of you.

DICK. But it is exceptional, I mean in *my* case, isn't it?

[*The Colonel and* MRS. GWYN *are coming down the lawn.*

MISS BEECH. Oh! *very!*

[*She sits beneath the tree and fans herself.*

COLONEL. The girls are all sitting out, Dick! I've been obliged to dance myself. Phew!

[*He mops his brow.*]

[DICK *swinging round goes rushing off towards the house.*]

[*Looking after him.*] Hallo! What's the matter with him? Cooling your heels, Peachey? By George! it's hot. Fancy the poor devils in London on a night like this, what? [*He sees the moon.*] It's a full moon. You're lucky to be down here, Molly

MRS. GWYN. [*In a low voice.*] Very!

MISS BEECH. Oh! so you think she's lucky, do you

COLONEL. [*Expanding his nostrils.*] Delicious scent to-night! Hay and roses—delicious.

[*He seats himself between them.*]

A shame that poor child has knocked up like this. Don't think it was the sun myself—more likely neuralgic—she's subject to neuralgia, Molly.

MRS. GWYN. [*Motionless.*] I know.

COLONEL. Got too excited about your coming. I told Nell not to keep worrying her about her frock, and this is the result. But your Aunt—you know—she can't let a thing alone!

MISS BEECH. Ah! 'tisn't neuralgia.

[MRS. GWYN *looks at her quickly and averts her eyes.*

COLONEL. Excitable little thing. You don't understand her, Peachey.

MISS BEECH. Don't I?

COLONEL. She's all affection. Eh, Molly? I re-

member what I was like at her age, a poor affectionate little rat, and now look at me!

MISS BEECH. [*Fanning herself.*] I see you.

COLONEL. [*A little sadly.*] We forget what we were like when we were young. She's been looking forward to to-night ever since you wrote; and now to have to go to bed and miss the dancing. Too bad!

MRS. GWYN. Don't, Uncle Tom!

COLONEL. [*Patting her hand.*] There, there, old girl, don't think about it. She'll be all right to-morrow.

MISS BEECH. If I were her mother I'd soon have her up.

COLONEL. Have her up with that headache! What are you talking about, Peachey?

MISS BEECH. *I* know a remedy.

COLONEL. Well, out with it.

MISS BEECH. Oh! Molly knows it too!

MRS. GWYN. [*Staring at the ground.*] It's easy to advise.

COLONEL. [*Fidgeting.*] Well, if you're thinking of morphia for her, don't have anything to do with it I've always set my face against morphia; the only time I took it was in Burmah. I'd raging neuralgia for two days. I went to our old doctor, and I made him give me some. "Look here, doctor," I said, "I hate the idea of morphia, I've never taken it, and I never want to."

MISS BEECH. [*Looking at* MISS GWYN.] When a

tooth hurts, you should have it out. It's only putting off the evil day.

COLONEL. You say that because it wasn't your own.

MISS BEECH. Well, it was hollow, and you broke your principles!

COLONEL. Hollow yourself, Peachey; you're as bad as any one!

MISS BEECH [*With devilry.*] Well, I know that! [*She turns to* MRS. GWYN.] He should have had it out! Shouldn't he, Molly?

MRS. GWYN. I—don't—judge for other people.

[*She gets up suddenly, as though deprived of air.*

COLONEL. [*Alarmed.*] Hallo, Molly! Aren't *you* feeling the thing, old girl?

MISS BEECH. Let her get some air, poor creature!

COLONEL. [*Who follows anxiously.*] Your Aunt's got some first-rate sal volatile.

MRS. GWYN. It's all right, Uncle Tom. I felt giddy, it's nothing, now.

COLONEL. That's the dancing. [*He taps his forehead.*] I know what it is when you're not used to it.

MRS. GWYN. [*With a sudden bitter outburst.*] I suppose you think I'm a very bad mother to be amusing myself while Joy's suffering.

COLONEL. My dear girl, whatever put such a thought into your head? We all know if there were anything you *could* do, you'd do it at once, wouldn't she, Peachey?

[MISS BEECH *turns a slow look on* MRS. GWYN.

MRS. GWYN. Ah! you see, Peachey knows me better.

COLONEL. [*Following up his thoughts.*] I always think women are wonderful. There's your Aunt, she's very funny, but if there's anything the matter with me, she'll sit up all night; but when she's ill herself, and you try to do anything for her, out she raps at once.

MRS. GWYN [*In a low voice.*] There's always *one* that a woman will do anything for.

COLONEL. Exactly what I say. With your Aunt it's me, and by George! Molly, sometimes I wish it wasn't.

MISS BEECH. [*With meaning.*] But is it ever for another *woman!*

COLONEL. You old cynic! D'you mean to say Joy wouldn't do anything on earth for her Mother, or Molly for Joy? You don't know human nature. What a wonderful night! Haven't seen such a moon for years, she's like a great, great lamp!

[MRS. GWYN *hiding from* MISS BEECH'S *eyes, rises and slips her arm through his; they stand together looking at the moon.*]

Don't like these Chinese lanterns, with that moon—tawdry! eh! By Jove, Molly, I sometimes think we humans are a rubbishy lot—each of us talking and thinking of nothing but our own potty little affairs and when you see a great thing like that up there —— [*Sighs.*] But there's your Aunt, if I were to say a thing like that to her she'd—she'd think me

a lunatic; and yet, you know, she's a *very good* woman.

MRS. GWYN. [*Half clinging to him.*] Do *you* think me very selfish, Uncle Tom?

COLONEL. My dear—what a fancy! Think you selfish—of *course* I don't; why should I?

MRS. GWYN. [*Dully.*] I don't know.

COLONEL. [*Changing the subject nervously.*] I like your friend, Lever, Molly. He came to me before dinner quite distressed about your Aunt, beggin' me not to take those shares. She'll be the first to worry me, but he made such a point of it, poor chap—in the end I was obliged to say I wouldn't. I thought it showed very nice feeling. [*Ruefully.*] It's a pretty tight fit to make two ends meet on my income—I've missed a good thing, all owing to your Aunt. [*Dropping his voice.*] I don't mind telling you, Molly, I think they've got a much finer mine there than they've any idea of.

[MRS. GWYN *gives way to laughter that is very near to sobs.*

[*With dignity.*] I can't see what there is to laugh at.

MRS. GWYN. I don't know what's the matter with me this evening.

MISS BEECH. [*In a low voice.*] *I* do.

COLONEL. There, there! Give me a kiss, old girl [*He kisses her on the brow.*] Why, you're forehead's as hot as fire. I know—I know—you're fretting about Joy. Never mind—come! [*He draws her hand beneath*

his arm.] Let's go and have a look at the moon on the river. We all get upset at times; eh ' [*Lifting his hand as if he had been stung.*] Why, you're not crying, Molly! I say! Don't do that, old girl, it makes me wretched. Look here, Peachey. [*Holding out the hand on which the tear has dropped.*] This is dreadful!

MRS. GWYN. [*With a violent effort.*] It's all right, Uncle Tom!

[MISS BEECH *wipes her own eyes stealthily. From the house is heard the voice of* MRS HOPE, *calling* "TOM."

MISS BEECH. Some one calling you!

COLONEL. There, there, my dear, you just stay here, and cool yourself—I'll come back—shan't be a minute. [*He turns to go.*]

[MRS. HOPE'S *voice sounds nearer.*]

[*Turning back.*] And Molly, old girl, don't you mind anything I said. I don't remember what it was—it must have been *something*, I suppose.

[*He hastily retreats.*

MRS. GWYN. [*In a fierce low voice*] Why do you torture me?

MISS BEECH. [*Sadly.*] I don't want to torture you.

MRS. GWYN. But you do. D'you think I haven't seen this coming—all these weeks. I knew she must find out some time! But even a day counts——

MISS BEECH. I don't understand why you brought him down here.

MRS. GWYN. [*After staring at her, bitterly.*] When day after day and night after night you've thought

of nothing but how to keep them both, you might a little want to prove that it was possible, mightn't you? But *you don't* understand—how should you? You've never been a mother! [*And fiercely.*] You've never had a lov——

[Miss Beech *raises her face—it is all puckered.*] [*Impulsively.*] Oh, I didn't mean that, Peachey!

Miss Beech. All right, my dear.

Mrs. Gwyn. I'm so dragged in two [*She sinks into a chair.*] I knew it must come.

Miss Beech. Does she know everything, Molly?

Mrs. Gwyn. She guesses.

Miss Beech. [*Mournfully.*] It's either him or her then, my dear; one or the other you'll have to give up.

Mrs. Gwyn. [*Motionless.*] Life's very hard on women?

Miss Beech. Life's only just beginning for that child, Molly.

Mrs. Gwyn. You don't care if it ends for *me!*

Miss Beech. Is it as bad as that?

Mrs. Gwyn. Yes.

Miss Beech. [*Rocking her body.*] Poor things! Poor things!

Mrs. Gwyn. Are you still fond of me?

Miss Beech. Yes, yes, my dear, of course I am.

Mrs. Gwyn. In spite of my—wickedness?

[*She laughs.*

Miss Beech. Who am I to tell what's wicked and what isn't? God knows you're both like daughters to me.

MRS. GWYN. [*Abruptly.*] I can't.

MISS BEECH. Molly.

MRS. GWYN. You don't know what you're asking.

MISS BEECH. If I could save you suffering, my dear, I would. I hate suffering, if it's only a fly, I hate it.

MRS. GWYN. [*Turning away from her.*] Life isn't fair. Peachey, go in and leave me alone.

[*She leans back motionless.*

[MISS BEECH *gets off her seat, and stroking* MRS. GWYN'S *arm in passing goes silently away. In the opening of the wall she meets* LEVER *who is looking for his partner. They make way for each other.*

LEVER. [*Going up to* MRS. GWYN—*gravely.*] The next is our dance, Molly.

MRS. GWYN. [*Unmoving.*] Let's sit it out here, then.

[LEVER *sits down.*

LEVER. I've made it all right with your Uncle.

MRS. GWYN. [*Dully.*] Oh?

LEVER. I spoke to him about the shares before dinner.

MRS. GWYN. Yes, he told me, thank you.

LEVER. There's nothing to worry over, dear.

MRS. GWYN. [*Passionately.*] What does it matter about the wretched shares *now*? I'm stifling.

[*She throws her scarf off*

LEVER. I don't understand what you mean by "now."

MRS. GWYN. Don't you?

LEVER. We weren't—Joy can't *know*—why should she? I don't believe for a minute——

MRS. GWYN. Because you don't want to.

LEVER. Do you mean she does?

MRS. GWYN. Her heart knows.

[LEVER *makes a movement of discomfiture; suddenly* MRS. GWYN *looks at him as though to read his soul.*]

I seem to bring you nothing but worry, Maurice. Are you tired of me?

LEVER. [*Meeting her eyes.*] No, I am not.

MRS. GWYN. Ah, but would you tell me if you were?

LEVER. [*Softly.*] Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

[MRS. GWYN *struggles to look at him, then covers her face with her hands.*

MRS. GWYN. If I were to give you up, you'd forget me in a month.

LEVER. Why do you say such things?

MRS. GWYN. If only I could believe I was necessary to you!

LEVER. [*Forcing the fervour of his voice.*] But you *are!*

MRS. GWYN. Am I? [*With the ghost of a smile.*] Midsummer day!

[*She gives a laugh that breaks into a sob.*

[*The music of a waltz sounds from the house.*

LEVER. For God's sake, don't, Molly—I don't believe in going to meet trouble.

MRS. GWYN. It's staring me in the face.

LEVER. Let the future take care of itself!

[MRS. GWYN *has turned away her face, covering it with her hands.*]

Don't, Molly! [*Trying to pull her hands away.*] Don't!

MRS. GWYN. Oh! what *shall* I do?

[*There is a silence; the music of the waltz sounds louder from the house.*]

[*Starting up.*] Listen! One can't sit it out and dance it too. Which is it to be, Maurice, dancing—or sitting out? It must be one or the other, mustn't it?

LEVER. Molly! Molly!

MRS. GWYN. Ah, my dear! [*Standing away from him as though to show herself.*] How long shall I keep you? This is all that's left of me. It's time I joined the wallflowers. [*Smiling faintly.*] It's time I played the mother, isn't it? [*In a whisper.*] It'll be all sitting out then.

LEVER. Don't! Let's go and dance, it'll do you good.

[*He puts his hands on her arms, and in a gust of passion kisses her lips and throat.*

MRS. GWYN. I can't give you up—I can't. Love me, oh! love me!

[*For a moment they stand so; then, with sudden remembrance of where they are, they move apart.*

LEVER. Are you all right now, darling?

MRS. GWYN. [*Trying to smile.*] Yes, dear—quite.

LEVER. Then let's go, and dance. [*They go.*

[*For a few seconds the hollow tree stands alone; then from the house* ROSE *comes and enters it. She takes out a bottle of champagne, wipes it, and carries it away; but seeing* MRS. GWYN'S *scarf lying across the chair, she fingers it, and stops, listening to the waltz. Suddenly draping it round her shoulders, she seizes the bottle of champagne, and waltzes with abandon to the music, as though avenging a long starvation of her instincts. Thus dancing, she is surprised by* DICK, *who has come to smoke a cigarette and think, at the spot where he was told to "have a go."* ROSE, *startled, stops and hugs the bottle.*

DICK. It's not claret, Rose, I shouldn't warm it.

[ROSE, *taking off the scarf, replaces it on the chair; then with the half-warmed bottle, she retreats.* DICK, *in the swing, sits thinking of his fate. Suddenly from behind the hollow tree, he sees* JOY *darting forward in her day dress with her hair about her neck, and her skirt all torn. As he springs towards her she turns at bay.*

DICK. Joy!

JOY. I want Uncle Tom.

DICK. [*In consternation.*] But ought you to have got up—I thought you were ill in bed; oughtn't you to be lying down?

JOY. I haven t *been* in bed. Where's Uncle Tom ?

DICK. But where have you been—your dress is all torn? Look ! [*He touches the torn skirt.*

JOY. [*Tearing it away.*] In the fields. Where's uncle Tom?

DICK. Aren't you really ill then ?

[JOY *shakes her head.* DICK, *showing her the irises.*] Look at these. They were the best I could get !

JOY. Don't! I want Uncle Tom !

DICK. Won't you take them ?

JOY. I've got something else to do.

DICK. [*With sudden resolution.*] What do you want the Colonel for ?

JOY. I want him.

DICK. Alone ?

JOY. Yes.

DICK. Joy, what *is* the matter ?

JOY. I've got something to tell him.

DICK. What? [*With sudden inspiration.*] Is it about Lever ?

JOY. [*In a low voice.*] The mine.

DICK. The mine ?

JOY. It's not—not a proper one.

DICK. How do you mean, Joy ?

JOY. I overheard. I don't care, I listened. I wouldn't if it had been anybody else, but I *hate* him.

DICK. [*Gravely.*] What did you hear ?

JOY. He's keeping back something Uncle Tom ought to know.

DICK. Are you sure?

[JOY *makes a rush to pass him.*]

[*Barring the way.*] No, wait a minute—you must! Was it something that really matters, I don't want to know what.

JOY. Yes, it was

DICK. What a beastly thing—are you quite certain, Joy?

JOY. [*Between her teeth.*] Yes.

DICK. Then you *must* tell him, of course, even if you did overhear. You can't stand by and see the Colonel swindled. Whom was he talking to?

JOY. I won't tell you.

DICK. [*Taking her wrist.*] Was it—was it your Mother? [JOY *bends her head.*] But if it was your Mother, why doesn't she——

JOY. Let me go

DICK. [*Still holding her.*] I mean I can't see what—

JOY. [*Passionately.*] Let me *go!*

DICK. [*Releasing her.*] I'm thinking of your Mother Joy. She would never——

JOY. [*Covering her face.*] That man!

DICK. But Joy, just think! There must be some mistake. It's so queer—it's *quite impossible!*

JOY. He won't let her.

DICK. Won't let her—won't *let* her? But—— [*Stopping dead, and in a very different voice.*] Oh!

JOY. [*Passionately.*] Why d'you look at me like that? Why can't you speak?

[*She waits for him to speak, but he does not*

I'm going to show what he is, so that mother shan't speak to him again. I can—can't I—if I tell Uncle Tom?—can't I——?

DICK. But Joy—if your Mother knows a thing like —that——

JOY. She wanted to tell—she begged him—and he wouldn't.

DICK. But, Joy, dear, it means——

JOY. I hate him, I want to make her hate him, and I *will.*

DICK. But, Joy, dear, don't you see—if your Mother knows a thing like that, and doesn't speak of it, it means that she—it means that you can't *make* her hate him—it means—— If it were anybody else, but, well, you can't give *your own Mother* away!

JOY. How dare you! How *dare* you! [*Turning to the hollow tree.*] It isn't true—— Oh! it *isn't* true?

DICK. [*In deep distress.*] Joy, dear, I never meant, I didn't really! [*He tries to pull her hands down from her face.*

JOY. [*Suddenly.*] Oh! go away, go *away!*

[MRS. GWYN *is seen coming back.* JOY *springs into the tree.* DICK *quickly steals away.* MRS. GWYN *goes up to the chair and takes the scarf that she has come for, and is going again when* JOY *steals out to her.*]

Mother! [MRS. GWYN *stands looking at her with her teeth set on her lower lip.*]

Oh! Mother, it isn't true?

MRS. GWYN. [*Very still.*] What isn't true?

JOY. That you and he are——

[*Searching her Mother's face, which is deadly still. In a whisper*]

Then it *is* true. Oh!

MRS. GWYN. That's enough, Joy! What *I* am is *my* affair—not *yours*—do you understand?

JOY. [*Low and fierce.*] Yes, I *do*.

MRS. GWYN. You don't. You're only a child.

JOY. [*Passionately.*] I understand that you've hurt—— [*She stops.*

MRS. GWYN. Do you mean your father?

JOY. [*Bowing her head.*] Yes, and—and me. [*She covers her face.*] I'm—I'm ashamed.

MRS. GWYN. I brought you into the world, and you say that to me? Have I been a bad mother to you?

JOY. [*In a smothered voice.*] Oh! Mother!

MRS. GWYN. Ashamed? Am *I* to live all my life like a dead woman because you're ashamed? Am I to live like the dead because you're a child that knows nothing of life? Listen, Joy, you'd better understand this once for all. Your Father has no right over me and he knows it. We've been hateful to each other for years. *Can* you understand that? Don't cover your face like a child—look at me.

[JOY *drops her hands, and lifts her face.* MRS. GWYN *looks back at her, her lips are quivering; she goes on speaking with stammering rapidity.*]

D'you think—because I suffered when you were born and because I've suffered since with every ache you

ever had, that that gives you the right to dictate to me now? [*In a dead voice.*] I've been unhappy enough and I shall be unhappy enough in the time to come. [*Meeting the hard wonder in* Joy's *face.*] Oh! you untouched things, you're as hard and cold as iron.

Joy. I would do anything for *you*, Mother.

Mrs. Gwyn. Except—let me live, Joy. That's the only thing you won't do for me, I quite understand.

Joy. Oh! Mother, you *don't* understand—I *want* you so; and I seem to be nothing to you now.

Mrs. Gwyn. Nothing to me? [*She smiles.*

Joy. Mother, darling, if you're so unhappy let's orget it all, let's go away and I'll be everything to you, I promise.

Mrs. Gwyn. [*With the ghost of a laugh.*] Ah, Joy!

Joy. I would try so hard.

Mrs. Gwyn. [*With the same quivering smile.*] My darling, I know you would, until you fell in love yourself.

Joy. Oh, Mother, I wouldn't, I never would, I swear it.

Mrs. Gwyn. There has never been a woman, Joy, that did not fall in love.

Joy. [*In a despairing whisper.*] But it's wrong of you—it's wicked!

Mrs. Gwyn. If it's wicked, *I* shall pay for it, not *you!*

Joy. But I want to save you, Mother!

Mrs. Gwyn. Save me? [*Breaking into laughter.*

JOY. I can't bear it that *you*—if you'll only—I'll never leave you. You think I don't know what I'm saying, but I *do*, because even now I—I half love somebody. Oh, Mother! [*Pressing her breast.*] I feel—I feel *so awful*—as if everybody knew.

MRS. GWYN. You think I'm a monster to hurt you. Ah! yes! You'll understand better some day.

JOY. [*In a sudden outburst of excited fear.*] I won't believe it—I—I—can't—you're *deserting me*, Mother.

MRS. GWYN. Oh, you untouched things! You——

[JOY *looks up suddenly, sees her face, and sinks down on her knees.*

JOY. Mother—it's for *me!*

MRS. GWYN. Ask for my life, Joy—don't be afraid!

[JOY *turns her face away.* MRS. GWYN *bends suddenly and touches her daughter's hair;* JOY *shrinks from that touch.*]

[*Recoiling as though she had been stung.*] I forgot—I'm deserting you.

[*And swiftly without looking back she goes away.* JOY *left alone under the hollow tree, crouches lower, and her shoulders shake. Here* DICK *finds her, when he hears no longer any sound of voices. He falls on his knees beside her.*

DICK. Oh! Joy, dear, don't cry. It's so dreadful

to see you! I'd do anything not to see you cry Say something.

[JOY *is still for a moment, then the shaking of the shoulders begins again.*]

Joy, *darling!* It's so awful, you'll make yourself ill, and it isn't worth it, really. I'd do anything to save you pain—won't you stop just for a minute?

[JOY *is still again.*]

Nothing in the world's worth *your* crying, Joy. Give me just a little look

JOY. [*Looking; in a smothered voice*] Don't

DICK. You do look so sweet! Oh, Joy! I'll comfort you, I'll take it all on myself. I know all about it. [JOY *gives a sobbing laugh.*] I do. I've had trouble too, I swear I have. It gets better, it does really.

JOY. You don't know—it's—it's——

DICK. Don't think about it! No, no, no! I know exactly what it's like. [*He strokes her arm.*

JOY. [*Shrinking, in a whisper.*] You mustn't.

[*The music of a waltz is heard again.*

DICK. Look here, Joy! It's no good, we must talk it over calmly.

JOY. You don't *see!* It's the—it's the disgrace——

DICK. Oh! as to disgrace—she's *your* Mother, whatever she does; I'd like to see anybody say anything about her—[*viciously*]—*I'd* punch his head.

JOY. [*Gulping her tears.*] That doesn't help.

DICK. But if she doesn't love your Father—

JOY. But she's *married* to him!

DICK. [*Hastily.*] Yes, of course, I know, marriage is awfully important; but a man understands these things.

[JOY *looks at him. Seeing the impression he has made, he tries again.*]

I mean, he understands better than a woman. I've often argued about moral questions with men up at Oxford.

JOY. [*Catching at a straw.*] But there's nothing to argue about.

DICK. [*Hastily.*] Of course, *I* believe in morals. [*They stare solemnly at each other.*] Some men don't. But *I* can't help seeing marriage is awfully important.

JOY. [*Solemnly.*] It's sacred.

DICK. Yes, I know, but there must be exceptions, Joy.

JOY. [*Losing herself a little in the stress of this discussion.*] How can there be exceptions if a thing's sacred?

DICK. [*Earnestly.*] All rules have exceptions; that's true, you know; it's a proverb.

JOY. It can't be true about marriage—how can it when——?

DICK. [*With intense earnestness.*] But look here, Joy, I know a really clever man—an author. He says that if marriage is a failure people ought to be perfectly free; it isn't everybody who believes that marriage is everything. Of course, *I* believe it's

sacred, but if it's a failure, I *do* think it seems awful —don't you?

JOY. I don't know—yes—if—— [*Suddenly*] But *it's my own Mother!*

DICK. [*Gravely.*] I know, of course. I can't expect *you* to see it in *your own case* like this. [*With desperation.*] But look here, Joy, this'll show you! If a person loves a person, they have to decide, haven't they? Well, then, you see, that's what your Mother's done.

JOY. But that doesn't show me anything!

DICK. But it does. The thing is to look at it as if it wasn't yourself. If it had been you and me in love, Joy, and it was wrong, like them, of course [*ruefully*] I know you'd have decided right. [*Fiercely.*] But I swear I should have decided wrong. [*Triumphantly.*] That's why I feel I understand your Mother.

JOY. [*Brushing her sleeve across her eyes.*] Oh, Dick, you are so sweet—and—and—funny!

DICK. [*Sliding his arm about her.*] I love you, Joy, that's why, and I'll love you till you don't feel it any more. I will. I'll love you all day and every day; you shan't miss anything, I swear it. It's such a beautiful night—it's on purpose. Look! [JOY *looks; he looks at her.*] But it's not so beautiful as you.

JOY. [*Bending her head.*] You mustn't. I don't know—what's coming.

DICK. [*Sidling closer.*] Aren't your knees tired, darling? I—I *can't* get near you properly.

JOY. [*With a sob.*] Oh! Dick, you are a funny—comfort!

DICK. We'll stick together, Joy, always; nothing'll matter then.

[*They struggle to their feet—the waltz sounds louder.*]

You're missing it all! I can't bear you to miss the dancing. It seems so queer! Couldn't we? Just a *little turn?*

JOY. No, no!

DICK. Oh! try!

[*He takes her gently by the waist, she shrinks back.*

JOY. [*Brokenly.*] No—no! Oh! Dick—to-morrow'll be so awful.

DICK. To-morrow shan't hurt you, Joy; nothing shall ever hurt *you* again.

[*She looks at him, and her face changes; suddenly she buries it against his shoulder.*

[*They stand so just a moment in the moonlight; then turning to the river move slowly out of sight. Again the hollow tree is left alone. The music of the waltz has stopped. The voices of* MISS BEECH *and the* COLONEL *are heard approaching from the house. They appear in the opening of the wall. The* COLONEL *carries a pair of field-glasses with which to look at the moon.*

COLONEL. Charming to see Molly dance with Lever,

their steps go so well together! I can always tell when a woman's enjoying herself, Peachey.

MISS BEECH. [*Sharply.*] Can you? You're *very* clever.

COLONEL. Wonderful, that moon! I'm going tc have a look at her! Splendid glasses these, Peachey [*he screws them out*], not a better pair in England. I remember in Burmah with these glasses I used to be able to tell a man from a woman at two miles and a quarter. And that's no joke, I can tell you. [*But on his way to the moon, he has taken a survey of the earth to the right along the river. In a low but excited voice*] I say, I say—is it one of the maids?—the baggage! Why! It's Dick! By George, she's got her hair down, Peachey! It's *Joy!*

[MISS BEECH *goes to look. He makes as though to hand the glasses to her, but puts them to his own eyes instead—excitedly.*]

It is! What about her headache? By George, they're kissing. I *say*, Peachey! I shall have to tell Nell!

MISS BEECH. Are you sure they're kissing? Well, that's some comfort.

COLONEL. They're at the stile now. Oughtn't I to stop them, eh? [*He stands on tiptoe.*] We mustn't spy on them, dash it all. [*He drops the glasses.*] They're out of sight now.

MISS BEECH. [*To herself.*] He said he wouldn't let her.

COLONEL. *What!* have *you* been encouraging them.

MISS BEECH. Don't be in such a hurry!

[*She moves towards the hollow tree.*

COLONEL. [*Abstractedly.*] By George, Peachey, to think that Nell and I were once—Poor Nell! I remember just such a night as this——

[*He stops, and stares before him, sighing.*

MISS BEECH. [*Impressively.*] It's a comfort she's got that good young man. She's found out that her mother and this Mr. Lever are—*you* know.

COLONEL. [*Losing all traces of his fussiness, and drawing himself up as though he were on parade.*] You tell me that my niece——?

MISS BEECH. Out of her own mouth!

COLONEL. [*Bowing his head.*] I never would have believed she'd have forgotten herself.

MISS BEECH. [*Very solemnly.*] Ah, my dear! We're all the same; we're all as hollow as that tree! When it's ourselves it's always a *special case!*

[*The* COLONEL *makes a movement of distress, and* MISS BEECH *goes to him.*]

Don't you take it so to heart, my dear! [*A silence.*

COLONEL. [*Shaking his head.*] I couldn't have believed Molly would forget that child.

MISS BEECH. [*Sadly.*] They must go their own ways, poor things! She can't put herself in the child's place, and the child can't put herself in Molly's. A woman and a girl—there's the tree of life between them!

COLONEL. [*Staring into the tree to see indeed if that were the tree alluded to.*] It's a grief to me, Peachey,

it's a grief! [*He sinks into a chair, stroking his long moustaches. Then to avenge his hurt.*] Shan't tell Nell—dashed if I do anything to make the trouble worse!

MISS BEECH. [*Nodding.*] There's suffering enough, without adding to it with our trumpery judgments! If only things would last between them!

COLONEL. [*Fiercely.*] Last! By George, they'd better—— [*He stops, and looking up with a queer sorry look.*] I say, Peachey—*Life's very funny!*

MISS BEECH. Men and women are! [*Touching his forehead tenderly.*] There, there—take care of your poor, dear head! Tsst! The blessed innocents!

[*She pulls the* COLONEL*'s sleeve. They slip away towards the house, as* JOY *and* DICK *come back. They are still linked together, and stop by the hollow of the tree.*

JOY. [*In a whisper.*] Dick, is love always like this!

DICK. [*Putting his arms round her, with conviction.*] *It's never been like this before. It's you and me!*

[*He kisses her on the lips.*

The curtain falls.

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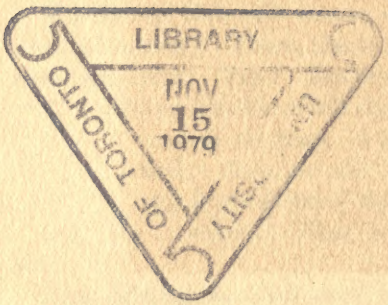
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